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BY INTERVENTION OF PROVIDENCE

BY STEPHEN MCKENNA



NOVELS:

VINDICATION

THE COMMANDMENT OF MOSES

SOLILOQUY

THE CONFESSIONS OF A WELL-MEANING
WOMAN

THE SENSATIONALISTS:

I *Lady Lilith*

II *The Education of Eric Lane*

III *The Secret Victory*

SONIA MARRIED

MIDAS AND SON

NINETY-SIX HOURS' LEAVE

SONIA

THE SIXTH SENSE

SHEILA INTERVENES

THE RELUCTANT LOVER

BY INTERVENTION OF PROVIDENCE

WHILE I REMEMBER

TEX: A CHAPTER IN THE LIFE OF
ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS

BY INTERVENTION OF PROVIDENCE

BY
STEPHEN McKENNA,



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1923

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To

I had intended to winter this year in Burma, but was invited to visit the Bahamas; and, as my headquarters were in the island of New Providence, you will understand why this title has been chosen. Since everything in this scrap-book was addressed to you and I have your permission to make these letters public, it is only fitting that I should ask leave to dedicate it, in some discreet form, to you.

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PART ONE

FROM AVONMOUTH TO BARBADOS

PART ONE

From Avonmouth to Barbados

AVONMOUTH. 13 JANUARY, 1923.

A gong is beating to urge all visitors ashore; and these last words go to you by the hand of our pilot. I lay last night at Bristol and came here at mid-day in time to see my boat being tugged down stream to the pier-head.

Of all our passengers I know not one; of the visitors who are hastening down the gangway none has come to bid me good-bye. This leaving has been ill-arranged; and I must improve upon it another year. I did indeed take steps . . .

But there is no time to describe in this letter why no handkerchief is fluttering for me from the pier-head. Bless you! Good-bye! Later you shall be told the full poignancy of

GOING AWAY ALONE

No man, if Dr. Johnson is to be believed, would go on board a ship if he had the contrivance to get himself into a jail; and one of the doctor's reasons for disparaging travel by sea was that even a jail commonly afforded better company than was to be found in a ship.

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Dr. Johnson was incurably fond of company and would put up with men and women whose pale ghosts, brought back to life by the genius of Boswell and the garrulity of Mrs. Thrale, cause a less patient generation to prefer solitude. Yet the jails of his day were more delectable than the ships? The opinion is given without reservation, like many of Johnson's; and, in keeping with most of his more forcible contrasts, it is based upon an unfamiliarity with ships almost as complete as his ignorance of jails. Better company, indeed!

Ships and jails have both changed in the last century and a half; but both possess characteristics that can have changed little. In a jail—I feel no less competent than Johnson to dogmatize about jails—the prisoner spends most of his time in isolation; on board ship, isolation may be secured for the few moments that a passenger is allowed to occupy a bathroom, but for the rest of the time he exercises himself, he rests, he eats, he drinks, he reads, he smokes and perhaps he sleeps in public. That should have pleased Johnson.

The quality of the company varies, no doubt, from ship to ship; but on the smallest there is yet enough to give Dr. Johnson his audience for eighteen hours a day. It is for those with a smaller appetite for company, for conversation, for this living in public to cry out that no man would choose to go on board a ship if he had the contrivance to get himself into a jail. The company, like the conversation of the Suicide Club's president, may be too rich or racy, too droll or delicate for plain people.

Some of us are shy even with our friends and terri-

From Avonmouth to Barbados

fied of strangers. For us a ship provides the largest number of the most exposed places. Before the pilot has been dropped, some one has set out on that career of wanton mischief which is described as "breaking the ice"; we are interrogated about our destination by people who lack even the justification of vulgar curiosity (if they wanted to know whither we were bound, they could ask the purser or look at our labels; what they want to do is to break the ice); soon an entertainment-committee springs into life, and the ice's prospects are gloomy indeed.

Some of us, the shy and easily frightened, have indeed succeeded in collecting wives or sisters; and no pity need be wasted on a man who embarks with a ready-made buffer on either hand. It is the diffident, solitary travellers who merit compassion.

Consider their lot! "We have all seen them," say the authors of *The Wrong Box*, "entering the table d'hôte at Spezzia, or Grätz, or Venice, with a genteel melancholy and a faint appearance of having been to India and not succeeded." They travel alone because no one will travel with them; they travel because they are not wanted in England rather than because they are wanted anywhere else. Some, indeed, have lonely offices in far places; some exchange one loneliness for another, calling it a holiday, and some have been ordered abroad, there to reflect upon the difference which such a word as "nerves" or "lungs" may take on when current colloquialism fences it warningly with inverted commas. None, however, would travel alone for pleasure; and from the height of a man's apparent gaiety, as he starts

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in pursuit of the sun, may be gauged the depth of his real despair. Bluff talk of viking blood, offensive pity for those who remain behind, too conscientious reference to mangoes, coral reefs and hovering frigate-birds may all be discounted. Your solitary traveller may deceive you, but he cannot deceive himself.

He tries, indeed. This year, as every year, he has been pretending that all is going to be different. On his last night ashore he dined sumptuously, but was careful not to admit that such another dinner would be denied him for five thousand miles. This voyage would be different: the fish, this time, would not taste of wood-pulp, nor the burgundy of red ink. This time the men on board would be polished citizens of the world, who would share his enlightened political views and appreciate his eclectic taste in literature. The women would be such as he saw dining all round him: dark-eyed, mysterious, alluring; soft of voice and gentle of manner; with delicate skins and exquisite hands; their clothes would be worthy of themselves. And, this time, there would be no small children on board; or, if there were, they would be invisible, inaudible, intangible. On this ship no one would dine at seven or play deck-billiards or pester the solitary traveller to enter for sweepstakes on the day's run.

All would be different! That was the solitary traveller's great discovery; and he forgot how often he had made it before. He never dreamed, as he looked round the coffee-room, that the strange men who had come in with a genteel melancholy and a faint appearance of having been to India and not succeeded were

From Avonmouth to Barbados

making the same discovery. Their smiles he put down to the fried sole and burgundy, which — though undeniably good — they were consuming as though they hardly expected to eat another decent meal for five thousand miles. He would have been furious to think that they were as romantic as himself, or that he was himself romantic, or that they had already inspected his baggage and were eying him with disfavour. When he crossed the hall and glanced, quite without thinking what he was doing, at the baggage piled round the lift, he was dismayed to think that some of these people were indeed coming by his boat. Little hope here of finding a polished citizen of the world! Clearly as though they had cried it aloud, these creatures would spend their days throwing rope-rings into buckets; and at night they would ventilate their views of reparations or the Irish Free State in a way that shewed them fit only for a mad-house.

Since nothing is created without a purpose, they would have had their uses if the solitary traveller could have found a companion to help in his analysis of them and to share his impatient scorn; but his fate was always to travel alone. Alone with his disillusion, he watched his great discovery wilting. This voyage, then, was going to be like every other! As he mounted the gangway, the ice cracked with a sound like a cry of pain; and a stranger observed sociably: "Nice-looking boat, sir, is n't she? Are you going far?"

And yet it was surely too soon to judge? The decks and corridors were so crowded, the passengers so thickly muffled that no one could say whether these furs

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and friezes concealed a polished man of the world or a mysterious, dark-eyed woman. As the gong began to beat, the crowd thinned; a line of solitary travellers, sullenly suspicious of one another as new boys on their first night at school, leant over the rail and peered through the dusk at a line of men and women on the pier-head. In a phrase more convenient than exact, half of them looked like polished men of the world; the other half were the embodied heroines of Meredith's novels.

"Romance," soliloquized the solitary traveller, "always stays on the pier-head and sends her elder sisters on board."

"Are you a bridge-player?" asked the sociable stranger.

AT SEA. 14 JANUARY, 1923.

We have passed from sight of land, though the gulls no doubt will keep us company to the Azores. The sea is a Mediterranean blue; the sun is hot enough to make overcoats a burden. We travel in ballast; and the cross-currents at the Chops of the Channel are bringing tribulation to the bad sailors. Those—I am one of them!—who feel at their best only when they are on board ship have already found their sea-legs and are walking aimless miles with an aggressive air of well-being. It would be hard to cherish resentment against your worst enemy; and, though it was a friend who betrayed me, I can now tell you—I hope without rancour—why no one came to see me off. . . .

From Avonmouth to Barbados

A TRAGIC DIALOGUE

SCENE ONE

A Dinner Party in London

Dramatis personæ: Time: The Present

She I

She. Seeing that you're going to spend the three worst months of the year in heavenly warmth, lovely surroundings, while I have to freeze in London . . .

I. Oh, I daresay I shall enjoy it when I get there; but all this business of saying good-bye and setting out on a strange ship with no one you've set eyes on before . . .

She. Why don't you take some one with you?

I. Those who've travelled with me never take the risk a second time; those who haven't travelled with me can see no reason why they should. For that matter, no more can I. Some, who shall be nameless, refuse even to see me off.

She. I told you before: if you were my husband, I'd see you off with the greatest pleasure in the world. There *must* be others.

I. There are. They say what you've just said. If they could be quite sure I was n't coming back . . . I can hardly ask a respectable *jeune fille*—

She. Even if you knew any—

I. To come all the way to Avonmouth and wave a handkerchief at me. People would say I'd compromised her.

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She. I suppose they would; but why this passion for respectability? If I found you some one thoroughly disreputable . . .

I. People would say she'd compromised me.

She. Not if I explained. When a man's going to be divorced . . .

I. May I remind you that I am not yet married?

She. I am. That's why I'm entitled to talk about divorce. You have to supply evidence . . .

I. The chambermaid always identifies you, for a consideration; and you send the double hotel-bill to your wife's solicitors. Yes.

She. For a larger consideration the chambermaid will swear afterwards that the guilty couple occupied different rooms and in fact weren't guilty at all. The first piece of evidence is for the court; the second is for your friends. That's what I meant by 'explaining'. If I could say, on the sworn testimony of the chambermaid, that you weren't in any way compromised, I'm sure I could find you some one who would see you off. Where will you be spending your last night?

I. At the —— Hotel, Bristol.

She. And you're motoring down? And you'll leave it all in my hands? I should think that, if you were to pay her fare home and her expenses in the hotel and were to give her five pounds for herself, that ought to satisfy her. The chambermaid will be extra, but a sovereign or thirty shillings . . .

I. It sounds too ridiculously cheap. I suppose I shall be blackmailed when I come back?

From Avonmouth to Barbados

She. Why should you be? She has her professional reputation to consider. If word went round that she really compromised her clients, her livelihood would be gone. It's a very delicate business to convince a judge that you've helped a man to be unfaithful and then to convince his friends that you haven't. I don't know more than five or six women who could do it. Now, as regards age and looks . . .

I. She must be young, loving, beautiful, intelligent, well-born, rich, clinging but independent, docile and devoted . . .

She. I'm not trying to find you a wife.

I. You might succeed without trying. I want to enter into the spirit of the thing. When she waves good-bye to me, I want her to have real tears in her eyes.

She. You want a good deal for five pounds.

I. It was you who suggested the figure. Find me a beautiful and intelligent woman who will talk to me the whole way through dinner as though she enjoyed it. She may name her own price.

She. And you won't bring it up against her afterwards? (Eagerly) She's the sweetest thing you've ever met! Delicious to look at; very amusing. She isn't allowed much pocket-money, poor child.

I. What's her name?

She. I can't say, or she'll hear. You see the little dark-haired girl on my husband's left . . . ?

I. But she's adorable! Why have I never met her before?

She. She spends most of her time abroad. Her father's minister somewhere in South America. You didn't meet her when you were there last year?

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I. South America is a considerable continent. If you can't say her name, you can spell it.

She. I . . . M . . . O . . . G . . . E . . . N. Have you got it? S . . . A . . . W . . . L . . . E . . . Y.

I. A sweet name!

She. Shall I write it down?

I. I shall never forget it as long as I live! Imogen! Imogen! And what a sweet face! You really will arrange this?

She. I'll do my best. If you want to see tears in her eyes when she waves good-bye, you'll have to bring them there.

I. Perhaps . . . we . . . shan't say . . . good-bye.

SCENE TWO

In the Drawing-Room

An Hour Later

She. Already?

I. May we smoke here? I didn't want to miss . . . your young friend.

She. Imogen? I'm afraid she had to go on to another party.

I. Oh! Well, I hope you had time to arrange things.

She. I . . . told her that I wanted her to do a service for a friend of mine. She's ready for almost anything . . . as a rule.

I. As a rule?

She. Yes. I'm afraid I've rather a disappointment for you.

I. She draws the line at this? I'm sorry, but I'm

From Avonmouth to Barbados

honestly not surprised. It's rather a tall order to ask any girl to wander across England with a total stranger . . .

She. It wasn't that.

I. I hope it's not a question of the fee. I gave you *carte blanche*.

She. She'd said she'd do it, for the fun of the thing. . . . You know, this is most dreadfully hard to explain!

I. It's some personal objection? Then please don't distress yourself . . . I know my faults as well as any one.

She. But I gave you a most wonderful character! She fell in love with you from my description. Oh, everything went swimmingly! And then . . .

I. Well?

She. She asked your name.

I. That's harmless enough. I've never done anything to make it distinguished; but at least I've brought no discredit upon it. She could never have heard it.

She. I'm afraid she had. And I'm afraid she remembered it.

I. I'm highly honoured.

She. She has a good memory. I don't think you have. That's the reason I offered to write down her name for you.

I. And you may recollect that I told you I should remember it as long as I lived.

She. *She* recollected that, *too*. Apparently that was what you said when you heard it two years ago.

I. Two years ago?

She. When her father sent her back from South Amer-

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ica in your charge. . . . She said if you couldn't remember even her name . . . I don't despair. I'll do my best for you. But if you *do* have to see yourself off . . .

I. My faith in you is unbounded.

She. If I don't forget between now and Friday . . .

I. Shall I write it down for you?

She. No. I should have no excuse for forgetting.

I. You mean to forget?

She. My duty to my sex may make me.

AT SEA. 15 JANUARY, 1923.

At noon to-day I was handed a Marconigram. I have reached an age when indifferent news comes rarely; and, though there is no reason under heaven why Uncle Tim should not have come back from Australia, no reason why his mind should not be unhinged, no reason why he should not wish to make me the sole heir to his vast fortune, I do not really believe that he will. An unexpected message, then, probably meant bad news. I hesitated before opening the envelope.

My name was correctly spelt, but that may have been an accident. The ship's name was given aright. No shelving of responsibility here! I plucked up my courage.

Remember about Nathaniel destroy all Lausanne Letters.

The message was unsigned. So much for the facts. And the deductions?

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First: if this be a practical joke, the practical joker must be a man of substance.

Secondly: there is a Foreign Office man on board; and the message may have been intended for him.

Thirdly: when I left England, an international conference was sitting at Lausanne. The second Christian name of the Marquis Curzon is Nathaniel. But what am I to remember about him? He is Chancellor of the University of Oxford; he is His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. There must be other Nathaniels, but I cannot call them to mind. My Biographical Dictionary is silent. The name has been hunted ruthlessly through judges, kings, major and minor prophets: and the biblical scholars on board incline to the opinion that he was the father of some one like Boanerges.

Fourthly: the initial letters of the message spell the name RANDALL. Well, I have friends of that name; but they do not help me to Nathaniel or Lausanne. It is the Christian name of the Archbishop of Canterbury; but I am not on terms of intimacy with him.. Is he warning me for my own good? Was Nathaniel another name of Dathan or Abiram? With the best will in the world, I cannot destroy letters which I do not possess.

Of the proverbial three things that I do not understand, of the four that are too hard for me, there is none harder to understand than the temperament of

THE ANONYMOUS CORRESPONDENT

Stevenson, to whom we owe so much; Stevenson, who touched nothing that he did not adorn, left one unsettled

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account with the writers who came after him: nothing that he adorned can ever be touched by another pen. The blaze of his romantic imagination makes rushlights of any that try to shine in rivalry.

It is a little hard. Every novelist, sooner or later, will be tempted to describe an auction: the scene is always dramatic, the atmosphere so feverish that few men in middle life can boast of never having bidden involuntarily for something they did not want; and an auction, if it be only the dispersal of old text-books on the last day of the last term at school, is a thing that comes into the life of most men. Your novelist needs it in his attempt to paint the panorama of life; yet Stevenson, beloved of all novelists, blocks the way. You may state baldly that the proceeds of the auction realized so much; you may conduct your auction "off", as Miss Sackville-West has done in her beautiful story *The Heir*, while you paint the emotions of one man as his new inheritance is bid away from him; you may stage your auction, as Mr. Galsworthy did in *The Skin Game* (when, on the first night, the audience lost control and joined in the bidding); but, if you are wise, you will not focus your readers' attention on the progress and result of the auction itself. That has been done — once and for all time unless a greater genius arise — by Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, when Jim Pinkerton and the shyster bid for the wreck of the *Flying Scud*.

If you need to describe a duel, you will be prudent to fight it, conventionally, at daybreak. You may heighten your effects by using candle-light, but you are inviting comparison with *The Master of Ballantrae*.

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And, when a blind man unwittingly strays into a room full of watching enemies, it is rash to make him discover his circumstances by burning his hand with a lighted candle: that will recall the devilish figure of Pew and the most terrific moment in *Admiral Guinea*. Vitriol, too, is in every sense of the word a dangerous toy: you may find yourself plagiarizing *The Ebb Tide*, which is undesirable, or competing with the Grand Guignol, which will probably be sadistic.

And the unknown voice on the telephone must be charged with uncommon menace if it is to be more than a faint echo of that which whispered across San Francisco to enquire why Pinkerton's unsuccessful competitor had been so anxious to buy the mysterious wreck. Loudon Dodd, if I remember, overheard the shyster asking for the number and then, on an impulse, re-established the connection and drawled an innocent question that sent the man at the other end fleeing in panic to hide his guilty head on the other side of the world. It was an impulse, only an impulse; but what prompted it? What ultimate propulsion is behind those who write or telephone or send expensive cables without disclosing their names?

A boyish taste for mischief underlies the action of a man who advises all the members of a board or club: "Fly. All is discovered." And the cautious cruelty that is latent in most human beings must find a satisfaction in hitting when there is no chance of being hit back. One well-known writer, who was rejected for the army, received regularly, on the publication of each new book, a request in triplicate, at three addresses, to inform his

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anonymous correspondent what he had done in the great war. Modesty may account for some of these communications, for the writer occasionally gives initials or an insufficient address.

But what is the result, desired or expected? Is it an uncontrollable itch for self-expression? Is it vanity, that a man may boast "I wrote to the prime minister and gave him a piece of my mind"? You can make that boast without wasting a stamp; and, if it be not strictly true, it is probably no less efficacious. Is it exasperation? Though anonymous letters are seldom threatening—if you are foolish enough to think that unsigned vituperation will impress any one, you are probably foolish enough to think that a threat even unsigned will bring you within reach of the law—they are almost always hostile. You have made a speech or published a book or written to *The Times*; some one is irritated beyond bearing by your opinions or your mode of expressing them. In a theatre he could boo; at a public meeting he could practise cat-calls; but, so long as you sit snugly at home, infuriating him with your wrong-headed notions, he has no remedy but to sit snugly at home and snipe you with an anonymous bullet.

Often enough it is done for your own good: should you wax heterodox over morals or religion, you may count on a sharp reminder that you are flying in the face of the First Epistle to the Corinthians or of the Thirty-Nine Articles or of the First Three General Councils. Some people may rejoice that such rebukes carry no name; they might, otherwise, be tempted to a reply;

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and it is hard to know what reply you can make to the charge of flying in the face of the First Three General Councils. Your crime assumes the monstrous dimensions attained by that friend of Sidney Smith, who not only spoke disrespectfully of the Equator but openly damned the North Pole. These warnings for your own good are usually in the handwriting of women; and you may fancy that the maternal instinct of protection is working on your behalf. Or, if you be a curmudgeon, you may think that the world is overpopulated with insufficiently occupied people. There is, however, no universal explanation of the anonymous writer. Mischief, malice, idleness and exasperation all play their part; and a sensitive spirit will be dismayed to reflect that he cannot write or speak or breathe the common air without stirring the resentment of unknown men and women whom he never dreamt of offending. If a revolution broke out and he were haled to summary trial, these silent, obscure and unforgiving enemies might be represented on the jury. What chance would he have in face of the broad question: "Will any one testify against this man?"

And yet there is another side: it may be that some one will testify for him. There is one kind of anonymous letter that needs no explanation. Usually it contains a gracious expression of thanks, a welcome word of praise; always it ends with an apology for anonymity: "*I do not want you to think that I am an autograph-hunter, so I shall not sign my name. . . .*"

By Intervention of Providence

AT SEA. 16 JANUARY, 1923.

This cryptic Marconigram is going to have far-reaching consequences. My habits changed from the moment when I could not find Nathaniel in any available work of reference; for the future, my travelling-library must be increased; my baggage must grow to accommodate my travelling-library; a bigger stateroom leads logically to a bigger ship; and the size of a ship is ultimately determined by the size of the canals through which she passes and the docks in which she berths. In time, one will cease to travel at all; and the responsibility must be laid at Nathaniel's door.

What is the irreducible minimum of equipment that a single man, no glutton for luxury but content with the best, is entitled to take with him? Railway companies limit you to so many pounds; though, if you are unscrupulous, a shilling to your porter obviates discussion of 'excess charge'. Shipping companies permit you to stuff the space under your bunk with anything you can put there; and the rest is dumped in the hold under the misleading label NOT WANTED ON THE VOYAGE. (It is only when this heartless epitaph has been written that you remember putting all your cigars and most of your thin clothes into that despised trunk.) But the irreducible minimum?

This is not to be determined by limited liability companies, but by the artists in life.

Mr. Jingle, setting out by way of Rochester on a tour of indefinite length and variety, made shift with a brown-paper parcel small enough to be pocketed and, ac-

From Avonmouth to Barbados

According to his own story, sent the rest of his wardrobe by water in "packing-cases, nailed up—big as houses—heavy, heavy, damned heavy." Mr. Algernon Moncrieff, departing on a mission of delicacy and daring, instructed his servant to "put up" his "dress-clothes, smoking-jacket and all the Bunbury suits." The number of these we are not told; but he reached his destination with "three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat boxes and a large luncheon-basket"; by that time, however, he had taken on a new identity and had a new part to dress. Uncle Joseph, so bitterly but so justly indicted by brother Masterman for "indecentcy", weathered his bora in the Adriatic and fled from a dying jackal on the plains of Ephesus with no heavier encumbrances—sensible fellow—than a visored forage-cap, a phrase-book and a polyglot testament. And the White Knight, if he could remain astride his horse for more than ten yards, would go provided for all emergencies of weather and occupation, as the impecunious sportsman packs rifle, gun, rod, polo-sticks and the rest, on the off chance that a week-end by the river may develop into elephant-hunting at one end of the scale or a shrimping expedition at the other. The artists in life prove themselves conflicting guides.

I am on the side of the snails and would, for choice, always carry my house on my back. Take all the clothes you have; you need not wear them. Leave but one coat or hat behind; and you will want it. In darkest Africa you will be required to present a cup to some winning team; if you have no club-tie in your kit, you are in as bad case as any visiting sovereign who omits to don the

By Intervention of Providence

uniform of the foreign regiment that supplies his guard of honour. And, whatever else you leave or take, do not forget to provide yourself with

BOOKS OF REFERENCE

Logically, humanely and rightly, the owners should supply them to every ship. If the captain is empowered to clap an intending homicide in irons, he should be empowered to intervene before the first knife is drawn. With an atlas, a dictionary, *Whitaker's Almanack*, a biographical dictionary, *Who's Who*, a dictionary of dates and another of quotations, an encyclopædia, Shakespeare's complete works, the Bible, a concordance, the *Daily Mail Year Book*, Wisden, the Turf Guide and the *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, there is no need for violence.

There is hardly any need for argument. The Derby was either run in a snow-storm or it was not; it was so run in Hermit's year or it was not. The liner which went ashore in broad daylight was either the *China* or it was not. The number of bottles in a pipe of port, the Postmaster-General in Mr. Gladstone's second administration, the exemption-limit for income-tax: it is all there, if you will but look for it. Instead, the ship is exposed to an hourly danger of unnecessary bloodshed.

If the owners protest that it is no part of their duty to safeguard or enlighten "the more cultivated portion of the ignorant", they should instruct their captains to put the corner-man under arrest the moment he declares himself. The marks are easy enough to identify:

From Avonmouth to Barbados

he always sits in a corner; and he exchanges "back-talk" with any one who comes within hail. He is fat, sunny and imperturbable; he lives for conversation and would spend his last shilling "to (what is, I believe, singularly called) stand" drink in the hope of securing a companion.

"I see you're reading a book," he proclaims. "I was a great reader when I was a young man. History. Poetry. All that. I've always admired the chaps who wrote books. I could never write a line myself. Not to save my life. I don't say but what I might have done something if I'd tried. Doesn't Shakespeare say '*Success is something-something . . . taking pains*'?"

A Voice (deferential from the corner-man's hospitality).

That's very true.

A Second Voice (with a university-extension twang).

Wasn't it "genius", not "success"?

A Third Voice (hurriedly). "Genius-consists-in-an-infinite-capacity-for-taking-pains."

The Corner-Man. That doesn't sound much like Shakespeare.

The Third Voice. It wasn't. It was Napoleon.

A Fourth Voice (leaving no room for argument).
Ruskin.

The Corner-Man (forcing his way back into the discussion). Well, whoever said it: I don't believe it's true. If I tried to paint a picture, I might shew—what was it?—"an infinite capacity for taking pains", but it would be a darned bad picture. I'm

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not a genius. Never pretended to be. No one knows it better than I do . . . And I don't see what good people do by saying things like that when they simply aren't true. A man like Ruskin . . .

The Second Voice. Ruskin said many foolish and untrue things, but he never said anything quite so foolish or untrue as that.

The Fourth Voice (combatively). May I ask what he *did* say?

The Second Voice. "The first essential of genius consists in an infinite capacity for taking pains." That, I think you will agree, is a vastly different thing. Most of us, I imagine, would be prepared to accept that . . .

A Fifth Voice. I'm not prepared to accept that Ruskin said it. If you'd said Carlyle . . .

The Second Voice. But I should n't dream of saying such a thing. I know Carlyle often gets the credit of it, but if I had my Ruskin here . . .

The Fifth Voice. Ruskin stole from Carlyle, wholesale; and, because he hadn't the honesty to acknowledge it, people who haven't read him . . .

The Corner-Man (soothingly; and perhaps with a feeling that he is being squeezed out of his own symposium). Can't say I've read much of him myself, but I saw him once. In Chelsea, it was. I saw him in his old cloak and hat, talking to himself. 'Eighty-eight or 'eighty-nine it must have been. I was a lad at the time.

A Second Voice. And by 'eighty-eight Carlyle was happily dead.

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The Corner-Man. Well, it may have been 'eighty-seven.

What was the year of the great dock-strike?

The First Voice. That was 'ninety.

The Third Voice (deferentially). You're quite sure of that? In 'ninety I remember I was out in Penang . . .

The Second Voice (curtly). The dock-strike took place in London.

The Third Voice (mildly). What I *meant* to say was that I remember the dock-strike perfectly. It was the first and only time that I set eyes on the great Cardinal Manning. I remember, too, that I could n't get home in 'ninety . . .

The Corner-Man. The strike went on for some time. Did it run on into 'ninety-one?

The Fourth Voice. It began in the winter of 'eighty-nine. I know that because the Parnell Commission . . .

The Second Voice. That was 'ninety-two.

The Fourth Voice. *The Commission*, not the *divorce*.

The Corner-Man. I can tell you an interesting thing about Parnell. When Gladstone died in 'ninety-five . . .

The Fifth Voice. He didn't die till 'ninety-eight. He *retired* in 'ninety-five.

The Second Voice. 'Ninety-four. It was Rosebery in 'ninety-five. That was the year he brought off the double event. While he was still at Cambridge, he always said he'd be prime minister and win the Derby. Well, he ran Ladas in . . .

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The Fourth Voice. Lord Rosebery was an Oxford man . . .

An hour later, when you have paced the decks and allowed the wind to blow away your headache, you will find the corner-man telling a story about the Klondike gold-rush. He will not swear to the date; but others will do so for him, every voice choosing a different year. Faces are flushed with intellectual effort; but the symposium is kept good-tempered by the tact of the corner-man who eases every crisis by ordering "another round of the same." The only danger of bloodshed comes from those outside the symposium: such an one as the luckless fellow who set this discussion ablaze by being seen with a book.

"Good-night, sir," says the bar-tender sympathetically. "Wonderful how they do talk."

"You never get tired of it?", asks the man with the book.

"Oh, I never listen, sir. If I did . . ."

"I was thinking that if you carried an encyclopædia and a few things like that . . ."

"Bless you, sir, they would n't look at them. Some gentlemen *like* the sound of their own voices."

Some, however, dislike the sound of other people's voices when it prevents their reading in peace; and, if the owners want to obviate bloodshed, they should supply every ship with an atlas, a dictionary, a concordance and those other works of reference which thoughtful committees of London clubs provide for their more contentious members.

From Avonmouth to Barbados

AT SEA. 17 JANUARY, 1923.

Four days have passed since we sailed. Most of us know by sight our neighbours in the saloon; and the printed passenger-list has a name for every one if only we knew where to apply it. A hundred to one, we shall none of us meet again; and, though we should like to make friends with just one or two, it seems almost an impertinence to concern ourselves with their private histories and fortunes.

La vie est brève:
Un peu d'espoir,
Un peu de rêve;
Et puis . . . bon soir!

La vie est vaine:
Un peu d'amour,
Un peu de haine;
Et puis . . . bon jour!

We have no time, even if we had the inclination, to play the private detective; unless, indeed, we be consumed by curiosity, like

THE INQUISITIVE MAN

When he books his passage, the Inquisitive Man asks the clerk in the passenger department who else is sailing by his boat; and, when he reaches the hotel on the eve of embarkation, he studies the luggage labels in the hall before allowing himself to be shewn his room.

"Sir John Bedminster is coming with us this trip," he announces, as you go aboard. "You know: chief justice of the Coral Islands."

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"I *don't* know him," you may answer.

"Oh, . . . I thought you might have been at Eton with him. . . . Or King's. . . . I can't say the bar is a profession I should fancy, but there are big prizes. Were you ever called?"

The Inquisitive Man collects information for the double pleasure of knowing more than other people and of being able to instruct them. Giving out with one hand, he takes in with the other; and, in the course of quoting you half a column from *Who's Who* about the chief justice of the Coral Islands, he elicits that you were yourself at Winchester (not Eton) and New College (not King's); also that you are a banker (not a barrister) and are travelling for health (not business). Within five minutes you may hear an irrepressible voice murmuring:

"Funny! We've another Wykehamist on board. A banker. . . . Architect, are you? . . . I beg your pardon! I did n't think you were old enough to have a grown-up daughter. 'Made sure she was your sister, but you must n't tell her I said so. This ought to be a very pleasant trip. Lot of nice people on board. I expect you know Greenslet, the singer? Absolutely broken down and ordered a complete rest . . . The little bald man with the red face is general manager of the Pan-American Trust Corporation. Dunning, his name is. The old boy with the cap is a great traveller: been everywhere. The two long-faced gals are his daughters. Between you, me and the post, I should say . . . well, wouldn't you? . . ."

By the end of the first evening the Inquisitive Man

From Avonmouth to Barbados

has a name and a label for every one on board. These he hands on to all who will accept them. At present, however, he knows little more than the purser could tell him after reference to the Board of Trade schedules in which every passenger gives his Christian name, surname, address, country of permanent residence, age, sex, colour, occupation, reason for travelling and ultimate destination. Any one could have learned as much, if—in Dr. Johnson's phrase—he had abandoned his mind to it. The Inquisitive Man will not rest contented until he has unearthed the exploits and recreations that are commonly left out of *Who's Who*.

"That big sullen-looking fellow has made a mess of his life," he will confide to you on the second day. "Oh, the old story: drink. He's travelling with a man he *calls* his secretary, but you and I know what that means. And the barman's been given strict orders not to serve him. It's only another instance of a man making money before he's learnt how to spend it. That fellow started at twenty as an overseer on a sugar-estate. In the first year he happened to break a leg; and, when he was convalescent, they turned him on to book-keeping. Five years after that he was a partner. Bit of a financial genius, in his way, but all to pieces now. . . . There are too many temptations in the tropics for a young fellow. You see that woman in the far corner? Handsome creature, if you don't mind her being on the dark side. She married the manager of the Central American Loan and Discount Company; two children, and both of them as black as your hat." . . .

On the third day the Inquisitive Man passes from

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human frailties to proved breaches of civil and moral law.

"Were you in the smoking-room," he asks, "when Sir John Bedminster and that fellow Townsend met? He *calls* himself Townsend, but that was n't his name ten years ago. He was mixed up in a big fraud somewhere in the Spice Islands; and Bedminster, who was attorney-general at the time, had to prosecute. Townsend got off on a technicality; but it's as much as his life is worth to go back to the Spice Islands, and Bedminster says he ought to have got seven years. I don't think any one else knew the story; but I went hot and cold all over when I saw them meeting. . . . It's a pity they can't issue a full passenger-list before sailing: that would prevent these unfortunate encounters. You know the little yellow-haired woman at the chief engineer's table? Her first husband had a job in Chile: something in the nitrate fields. One time, when he had to go up to New York, she had an affair with another man, and they decided to bolt together for England before the husband came back. They had to change ships at Cristobal; and, while they were waiting for an English boat, the husband met them on his way back from New York. I leave you to imagine the scene. They all came back together. When the husband found it was hopeless, he divorced her. The awful part is: it was only when she'd been divorced that the woman found the second man had a wife already. Tragedy, isn't it? She's quite young; and you can see she must have been a lovely girl."

There is honest compassion in the Inquisitive Man's

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voice; he would give much to make the little yellow-haired woman happy, though he would give more to know whether she is legally married to the man who sits with her at the chief engineer's table. Curiosity apart, the Inquisitive Man is a kindly, likable fellow; his inexhaustible vitality and interest are infectious. He is always surrounded by attentive listeners; and, as you walk round the deck, his pleasant, eager voice invites you to join him.

"We were talking about the old American colonel," he explains. "I may tell you he's no more a colonel than I am." . . .

"Were you in the army?", some one asks.

"Not in this war. Well, at the time of the Philippine trouble . . ."

Perhaps you do not care whether the Inquisitive Man was in the army or not. He has told you that he did not serve in the late war; and the answer is rather superfluous, because he was obviously over-age. That, however, is all that he does tell you; and at the end of the voyage you will be as ignorant as at the beginning whether he is married or single, rich or poor, a tinker, tailor or candlestick-maker. Does he, you wonder, puff out this cloud of innocent questions to hide some guilty secret of his own? Was he too the hero of an interrupted elopement from Antofagasta? Had he a finger in the Standard Bank fraud in the Spice Islands? You have no time to ask, for he has posed his three questions before you are ready with your first.

And, with all eternity stretching before you, would you wish to ask? You know his name, or the name

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under which — like “Townsend” — he chooses to travel. A hundred to one, you will not meet him again; and, though he is a kindly, likable fellow, it seems almost an impertinence to concern yourself with his private history and fortunes.

*La vie est brève:
Un peu d'espoir,
Un peu de rêve;
Et puis . . . bon soir!*

Assume the worst: if he have a secret, it may be so sinister that you will have to lay an information against him. Imagine the blood-lust that will overtake the ship when he is put in irons. Remember, as the wireless flashes its message to your next port-of-call, that you are responsible for bringing those police-officers on board.

And, when he has been shoved and carried down the accommodation-ladder, with hand-cuffs on his wrists and a loaded rifle on either side of him, realize that, if you live to be a thousand, you will never be sure whether the little yellow-haired woman is legally married to the man who sits with her at the chief engineer's table.

AT SEA. 18 JANUARY, 1923.

Every day the sun gains in strength; and the ice which began to be broken five days ago is now melting before our eyes. Starting with that universal: “Are you going far, sir?”, we have sorted out those who are making the round trip for the benefit of their health, those who have their homes in Central America or the West Indies and

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those who are transshipping for the west-coast ports of South America. By asking whether our neighbours consider this a comfortable ship, we ascertain that A has never before been out of England, that B prefers the food on the Dutch Mail and that C, who has travelled by every line in the world, gives the palm to the Nippon Yusen Kaisha. C, it appears, has spent his life collecting butterflies; B has oil interests in Trinidad; A has always yearned to travel, but her mother is an invalid and as she is the only daughter at home . . . Shropshire, yes; near Bridgnorth. Does any one know that part of England?

A following wind has blown away reserve. We—or at least some of us—want to hear about these others; we want even more to tell them about ourselves; but why must we wait five days before we are ready to exchange the stories of our lives? They are largely fictitious, I admit; but in less than five days an habitual liar should know whether any of his neighbours can catch him tripping. It is not diffidence; for, when the story begins, it is related with revolting particularity. The difficulty is to begin; and that difficulty is felt almost universally because our system of education does not provide for instruction in

CONVERSATIONAL OPENINGS

An archdeacon, on the authority of one bishop, is a man who performs achidiaconal functions; and an archidiaconal function, if you resolve it into its elements, is that which an archdeacon performs. Bishop Wilberforce is dead (“and I never saw any one who even pre-

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tended to regret him"); but his spirit seems still to brood over Oxford; and the editors of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* define "conversation" as "talk" and "talk" as "conversation." One expected better things of a university press; but a lexicographer, like Habakkuk—if Voltaire is to be believed—, is *capable de tout*.

If a bore be the man who talks about himself when you want to talk about yourself, the good conversationalist must be the man who talks about the things that interest you, or—better still—encourages you to talk about them yourself. Thus far in the positive degree. A better conversationalist will convey by means of quick nods and bright smiles, even—if a woman—by "You're so right" and—if a barrister—by "Quite . . . Quite . . . Quite", that what interests you cannot fail to interest every one of taste and knowledge. The conversationalist of the superlative degree is, beyond the faintest shadow of doubt or the loftiest flight of artifice, interested. With you, he loves caviare and Grock and Jorrocks and all the right things; but discriminatingly, not merely saying ditto to your own good taste, but divining a subtlety of palate which he would make bold to share with you.

The good conversationalist is necessarily rare, but less rare than you might think from an initial unpromising "I *envy* people who can get away from England at this time of year" or "Have you been following the Burslem murder?" Something may be done, even with such as these, if you persevere; there is no need yet to turn and discuss foreign exchange with the forbiddingly

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intellectual woman on your other side. The next words, for all you know, will be: "I believe you are a friend of *my* friend . . ."; and then you will know that she is going to play "Colonel Campbell."

The army-list is said to contain more Campbells than any other name; and the clan Campbell boasts more colonels than any other. Probably you know ten or twelve; but this is not necessary, as you have only to reply:

"You mean Geordie Campbell of the Nineteenth? I was out in Poonah with him; and we overlapped at the Staff College."

The perfect conversationalist then indicates equal willingness to play the hand herself or to let you play it; and she offers you a choice of declarations. Thus:

(A) "Do tell me about Poonah! Ever since I first read Kipling, I've so longed to visit India." This opens up literature, empire, travel and the political future of subject races. You can work in that polo story without strain.

(B) "Were you at the Staff College with Major O'Manney? I used to hunt with his sister in Ireland." While indicating indifference to polo, Kipling and the political future of subject races, this opens up hunting, the Somerville-and-Ross books, literature, empire, travel and the Irish Free State. If you have never taken the Staff College, you should firmly play the hand yourself or else indicate strength by saying:

"I used to know some O'Manneys in Hereford. The father was a canon of the cathedral."

This gives her a choice of theology, architecture and

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the ecclesiastical doctrine of divorce. If she says: "Oh, do you know Hereford?", this is a second call for a travel lead. If you ignore it, you may be thrown back on the Staff College. Well, the world is wide: you will soon discover a common interest; and, as the most erudite woman knows less geography than the most ignorant man, you need not spare the "mere corroborative detail." She will be bored if you say "When I was getting over influenza last year at Brighton . . ."; not so, if you begin: "I remember the first time I set eyes on Bussorah. It was in the Rains, and I'd gone down three days before with fever . . ." There are no rains in Bussorah, but she will not know that. And your influenza-story will do for any part of the world.

It is against the rules, when you say "I believe you are a friend of my friend Colonel Campbell," for your neighbour to reply "No, I'm not." She may, however, fence with "I used to know a *Major* Campbell." This should be a warning that she is very weak in one suit and needs help; you should encourage her with the widest possible choice of declarations: "Ah, he ended up as a colonel. I met him when he was a captain. Out in Poonah. D' you know India at all? No one's done justice to it, not even Kipling. It's going through a critical time, now, I'm afraid; but every great empire *has* disintegrated sooner or later. Does Campbell keep up his polo? When I saw him, he talked of going to live with the old canon at Hereford. (Lovely cathedral that is! Are you keen on architecture?). Then I saw that the canon had got himself into hot water by that letter of his on divorce. Personally, I thought it very

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sound. I suppose all this trouble in Ireland has knocked Campbell's hunting on the head? D' you think we're going to have a quieter time now that the Free State has been set up?"

If she refuses all these baits, you had best abandon one who will remain a conversational beginner all her days; sooner or later, you have to discuss foreign exchange with the forbiddingly intellectual neighbour. The sooner you start, the sooner it will be over; and, if you have a grenadier opposite, you can signal for help.

"Grenading" is in every way a more dangerous game than "Colonel Campbell" and should only be played by experienced conversationalists. At a dull party there is only one thing worse than a foolish discourse punctuated by painful silence: that is, a restful silence interrupted by inane discourse. Both produce a sense of discomfort; and it is the business of the grenadier to dispel this sense by shattering either the silence or the discourse. An accomplice has to be provided; but it is a point of honour among players of the game that they shall not concert their attack beforehand. If you cannot improvise, you must submit to whatever currency your intellectual neighbour chooses for ventilating her views on foreign exchange. The effect of a well-placed grenade may be seen from a single instance.

The Economist. . . . which, as you are aware, constituted par of exchange between London and New York at that time. You will remember that it became

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necessary during the war to fix an arbitrary rate; but, when the exchange was unpegged, sterling fell to 3.75 to the pound.

Her Victim (faintly). I remember.

The Economist. We may be thankful that the pound has made this recent marvellous recovery . . .

Her Victim. Funny that you should use that phrase! This afternoon—I should think it was between three and four—

The victim, as any compassionate observer may see, is making an attempt to extricate himself from the net of the economist; as an observer of any kind can see, he will not escape unaided. The superfluous detail—“I should think it was between three and four”—indicates that he is playing desperately for time. It is a signal for a grenade.

The Grenadier (leaning across table). Did you see him?

The Victim. Just for a moment. (Still playing for time) I telephoned to you at once, but you were out.

The Grenadier. You weren't allowed inside the cell?

The Victim. No, I had to speak through the grille. And there was a warder listening the whole time. The jugular vein was very nearly *servered* . . .

The Grenadier (with artificially feverish anxiety). But is she going to live?

The Victim (recollecting his own cue). They think so. If she does, it'll be a marvellous recovery. . . .

The Grenadier (with emotion). Thank God! Oh, thank God! When I saw his poor mother this morning . . . It's been a nightmare! Don't let's talk

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about it! (To the Economist) You must forgive me for interrupting you! This is a very dear friend of ours . . . only a boy still . . . (To the company at large) Is a man *ever* justified in trying to kill his wife?

All (including the Economist). Well, that depends . . . I knew a man once . . . The first time I was in Bussorah . . . A curious thing that I saw with my own eyes . . .

When you can open and close a conversation at will, you have little more to learn. You will then be able to give the whole of your attention to the problem why people converse at all. Are you the better off for their agreeing with you? And, if they disagree with you, do they not prove their own obstinate stupidity?

If, however, you are obliged to converse, aim at a higher level than "Are you going far, sir?" There is, in spite of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, a difference between 'conversation' and 'talk.'

AT SEA. 19 JANUARY, 1923.

Yesterday morning we passed the Azorēs. By to-morrow afternoon we shall have been at sea a week. At dinner to-morrow night we shall know whether a strict cycle is being observed in the delicacies that are offered to us. With the Green Mast line, you know that at luncheon every Tuesday and Friday, in all the ships of the line wheresoever they be, from Behring Straits to the Horn and from Fremantle to Dar-es-Salaam, the passengers are being tempted simultaneously with curried

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chicken and Swiss roll; the Blue Star lavishes 'plum pudding and hard sauce' every Sunday night; on the Isthmus and Occident . . .

But, if you have once travelled on one of these boats, you know beforehand what to expect. You know, too, that your neighbour will look up from his menu to exclaim: "Pea Soup! I'd forgotten it was Thursday." There will follow a discussion of food; some one will say "The best dinner I ever ate . . ."; and, when he has been silenced, you — or some one else — will indicate

THE PERFECT DINNER

"If any one can lend me a pencil . . .," began the corpulent man, turning to the blank side of the *menu* which he had criticized so unsparingly for three-quarters of an hour.

"One good thing about the war," the dyspeptic confided to the youngest bachelor on board: "it put an end to those interminable meals where you were offered four or five different kinds of meat alone. A man who leads a sedentary life doesn't *require* meat at night; and, whatever life you lead, *deux plats* should be ample. To my mind, a boiled sole and a couple of potatoes . . ."

"You must have something *before* the fish," objected the fragile woman who had never been observed to miss a course.

The corpulent man realized that the situation was getting out of hand.

"Has no one a pencil?", he demanded plaintively. "Oh, thank you very much, sir! . . . Now, I'll give

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you my rough idea; and you must all tell me what you think of it. To begin with . . .”

“Have the women a vote?”, asked the youngest bachelor suspiciously. “Yes? . . . With the greatest respect, I think that’s a mistake. Women have *no* palate for wine; and they know precious little about food. If you compare the catering at the best woman’s club and the worst man’s . . .”

“Charlie was elected to the Junior Motor Cycle Club just before we came away,” explained the mother of the youngest bachelor.

“To begin with,” said the corpulent man firmly, “I suggest: half a dozen oysters.”

He repeated his suggestion loudly, looked round the table and began to write. As soon as the hypnotic power of his eye was withdrawn, his audience stampeded.

“If I begin with oysters, I never want anything else,” complained the dyspeptic.

“*Half* a dozen?”, snorted the youngest bachelor.

“What time of year is this, dinner to take place?”, enquired the mother of the youngest bachelor, with the exaggerated innocence of one who is setting a trap.

“Any time between the beginning and the end of the oyster season,” snapped the corpulent man with less than his usual urbanity. “Half a dozen oysters, then; and a little chablis . . .”

“Oh, are you working out the drinks at the same time?”, asked the youngest bachelor. “Then I vote for a round of cocktails first.”

The mother of the youngest bachelor was heard to

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wonder what his father would think if he heard him talking like that.

"And quite right too, madam," interposed the dyspeptic. "If these young men knew the effect of pouring raw spirits into an empty stomach . . ."

"No harm in a sherry-and-bitters," suggested the mottled man who, at the right time and in the right place, saw no harm in a small Bass at eleven, an appetizer before luncheon, a gin-and- tonic at sundown, a rum sour before dressing and "just one more small whisky before the bar closes."

"What's to happen to the poor people who don't eat oysters?", asked the fragile woman.

No one paid any attention to her, however, because the corpulent man was engaged in a comparatively amicable but overpoweringly loud passage with the deaf old man whose name no one could discover. The deaf old man demanded that, if his good friend was allowed to order the food, he should himself say what wine was to be drunk with it.

"I'm a bit of a purist," he explained; "and I do *deplore*, yes, *deplore* the utter indifference which the present generation shews to the old tradition. The mania for champagne, which has been so justly described as the gilded courtesan of wine . . . The vandalism of calling for a whisky-and-soda here, a whisky-and-soda there . . . I'm thankful to say that the old rule survives on ceremonial occasions: chablis or sauterne with oysters; sherry, or madeira, or perhaps even a sip of punch with the soup; hock with the fish . . ."

"At present, we have not proceeded farther than the

From Avonmouth to Barbados

oysters," interrupted the corpulent man with a hint of waning patience. "If we stick to one thing at a time . . . Perhaps you will find that I'm not so utterly indifferent as some people to the old traditions. Oysters and chablis. I'll add sauterne if you like; but all the sauternes are on the sweet side, and as you must have lemon-juice or vinegar *with* your oysters . . . Frankly, I think it's a mistake; but I know you'll be able to quote good authorities against me. Oysters, then, with chablis *and* sauterne."

"What happens to the poor people who don't eat oysters?", enquired the fragile woman a second time.

"I hope we shall find something that you *can* eat, madam, later on."

"Oh, I'm not thinking of myself: I adore oysters; but lots of people don't."

"All the more for those who do," said the youngest bachelor eagerly. "Half a dozen oysters are no good to any one. I think, sir, you should really bring it up to a dozen."

"And the people who don't eat oysters . . ." persisted the fragile woman.

"They can look on," answered the mottled man.

"Oh, I call that mean. In addition to the oysters you might have plover's eggs . . . It's all right: they *do* come in season before oysters go out. Or smoked salmon . . ."

"If there's any smoked salmon going . . ." said the youngest bachelor tensely.

"Or caviare. What a lot of good ways there are of starting a meal! Melon . . ."

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"I prefer grape-fruit. Ready cut-up, you know; with a drop of maraschino."

"What a pity we can't have them *all!*" sighed the fragile woman. "Have any of you ever been in Russia? It used to be too wonderful before the war: tables and tables of *hors d'œuvres*. It was a meal in itself . . ."

"And then," the dyspeptic interposed sombrely, "one was required to eat *another* meal, which went on half the night. Course after course . . ."

"With sweet champagne . . . on top of that horrible potato-spirit," cried the old man whose name no one could discover.

"Once when I was in Sweden . . .," began the mother of the youngest bachelor.

The corpulent man slapped his hand down on the table with so much violence that a glass was overturned and fell to the floor.

"I *wish* he would n't do that!" muttered the fragile woman.

". . . was in Sweden," resumed the mother of the youngest bachelor. "At some restaurant . . . Charlie will remember the name . . . we were being entertained by some friends of my husband. Who *were* they, Charlie? Those big timber people. . . . Well, it doesn't matter. We were given an *immense* dinner; but *immense!* At the end the table was cleared, and the waiters put on a clean cloth. I thought this was a hint for us to go; and as I was the only woman . . . Not a bit of it! They were laying the table for supper: another *immense* meal. And, dear, hospitable souls, they

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were so terribly hurt if we refused a single dish. You remember, Charlie?"

"The number of people who dig their graves with their teeth . . ." groaned the dyspeptic.

"That Swedish punch is frightfully overrated stuff," announced the youngest bachelor. "I was told that, if you drank much of it, you could run but you could n't walk. I and another chap got hold of some one day . . ."

"I don't think I'd tell that story if I were you, Charlie," said the youngest bachelor's mother. "Er . . . what were we talking about?"

"We were . . . discussing . . . the perfect . . . dinner," the corpulent man reminded her, and every one speculated whether those big veins, standing out on his forehead, meant that he was going to have a seizure.

"Ah, yes! How far had we got?"

"Oysters . . ."

"Not for me, please!" protested the mother of the youngest bachelor. "I was devoted to them at one time; then I had a bad one. Ugh! I can taste it still. Horrible! What are you going to have after the oysters? Soup?"

"I thought of *tortue* . . ."

"Oh, let's have turtle," begged the youngest bachelor.

"Charlie dear . . . You mustn't mind him; he's only a boy. *Tortue*? And then?"

"*With* the soup," proclaimed the corpulent man, writing rapidly, "a little old sherry."

"Liverish," muttered the dyspeptic.

"With madeira for any one who likes it," added the old man whose name no one could discover.

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"After that . . ." the corpulent man continued with a rush.

Then an expletive escaped him, as the point of his pencil broke. In the silence that followed, the fragile woman suspended her reminiscences of Russia to enquire how the perfect dinner was shaping:

"What did you decide to have for the poor people who can't eat oysters?", she enquired. "I warn you that, if you have plover's eggs, I shan't be able to resist them. . . ."

The corpulent man was preparing an adequate answer, when his pencil broke a second time. Though his comment was inaudible to most of the company, the youngest bachelor's mother coloured softly and said she supposed that the stewards would be wanting to clear away soon.

"If those poor creatures," she whispered to the fragile woman, "had ordered three meals a day for as many years as I have . . ."

"It was a mistake to let these cackling females in," fumed the youngest bachelor, as the debate was adjourned to the smoking-room. "They have no palate for wine; and they know precious little about food. By the way, when you said '*tortue*', I thought you said some kind of 'broth.' You must have thought me an awful fool. . . . Well, how far have we got?"

"Oysters; and turtle soup . . . ,"

answered the corpulent man.

"To my mind, that should be enough for any one," said the dyspeptic. "*Deux plats*. I never eat more, myself. If I do, I have to pay for it afterwards. So

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will you all. The number of men who dig their graves with their teeth . . .”

AT SEA. 20 JANUARY, 1923.

For the last four days there has been a strong following wind; this, combining with the swell which a recent storm left in its wake, has tossed our lightly loaded ship about like a cork. By now, even the worst sailor has found some kind of sea-legs; but it is hard to sleep through the creaking and groaning of the wood-work as the ship strains between this wind and swell. Some atone for a broken night with a siesta after luncheon: indeed, from two till four, the decks are almost deserted; but it is only those who have spent much of their lives in the tropics who tell you with manly frankness that they are going to sleep. The rest, stifling a yawn, murmur that they have a book to finish, a diary to write or thin clothes to unpack. Later in the day, they assure you—without being asked—that they never closed an eye: indeed, if they slept by day, they would be unable to sleep at night; and somehow, you know, to waste this glorious sunshine by sleeping in a stuffy cabin . . .

No one believes these protestations; but no one resents them. We are each of us, in our own obscure, muddled way, equally at the mercy of

OUR ANCESTORS' IDEALS

It was Catiline, I believe,—though others must have felt the same exasperation—who found the burden of

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Cicero's prolixity so intolerable that he walked out of the House in the middle of a strongly worded attack upon his own character. And it was Cicero, I am very sure, who pursued him into retirement with invective that was intended to expose Catiline's consciousness of guilt and only succeeded in preserving for posterity a matchless example of that tautology against which Catiline's silent and hurried departure was a protest.

"*Exiit!*" Cicero thundered; "*Excessit! Erupit! Evasit!*"

And we may imagine Catiline's comment:

"Poor dear Tully never *will* use one word if he can make four do its work! What a ghastly thought that all his speeches will probably be collected and given to unending generations of luckless schoolboys! It's a dirty shame! (Proh pudor!)"

It was one such schoolboy who refused to believe that a great orator would express the same movement in four different ways: accordingly he blunted the subtle difference between the terms which Cicero had chosen and construed the passage freely:

"*Exiit*: he went out to dinner; *excessit*: he had too much to drink; *erupit*: he was taken ill; *evasit*: he said it was the lobster."

And, as the purpose of Cicero's speech was simply malicious defamation of character, the tender boy reveals a fertility of resource and a knowledge of psychology for which we look vainly in the embittered man. For nearly two thousand years Catiline has been made the archetype of shamelessness; but he really would have said it was the lobster. At the Dingley Dell

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cricket-supper, it was the salmon that caused the gentlemen of Mr. Wardle's party to behave so strangely.

But what a mean deception it is! And what a pitiful tyranny! Our ancestors, from the days of Noah, have laid down that alcoholic intemperance is, on first principles, to be discouraged: if you agree, then—in heaven's name—do not drink more liquor than you can carry; if you disagree, drink what you will unflinchingly and set down in your diary, with the brave candour of Pepys: "*Up; and so to bed drunke.*" If your practice fall below your theory, confess yourself a frail human being, talk—if you will—about the meshes of predestination; but do not shelter yourself behind "the voiceless children of the deep." In all things we have as good a right to our own opinion as our ancestors: let us have the courage of it. From *The Wrong Box*, as ever, the right note is to be charmed. When Uncle Joseph was discovered practising oratory in a public bar, he felt constrained to offer his nephew an explanation. "I daresay I surprise you with my presence in a public house; but the fact is, I act on a sound but little-known principle of my own—" "O, it's better known than you suppose," Michael Finsbury interrupted. "I always act on it myself when I want a drink."

Is not this straightforwardness better for a man's spirit than the archness, the smirking, the roguishness of William Dent Pitman, who, under the influence of "hot Scotch", "clinked glasses and giggled aloud" with the innocent skittishness of a "venturesome school-girl at a picnic"?

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Our ancestors, taken all in all, were probably neither better nor worse than we are. They drank more port wine than we do, though perhaps we should drink as much if they had not left us their gout to remember them by; but they never touched cocktails, because they never had the chance. Their vocabulary was rich, their conversation Rabelaisian; but the resources of Freud and Jung were denied them. They diced their patrimonies away; but we can lose all the money we want by accepting the Stock Exchange tips of our friends. They flaunted their mistresses scandalously; but they lacked our modern facilities for divorce. There is probably not much to choose between them and us.

And they writhed as painfully under the tyranny of an earlier generation as we writhe under theirs. It is comforting to realize that. The children of the Clapham sect were forbidden to read poetry of a morning; their children, in turn, were denied story-books of a Sunday; we, in our generation, were urged not to waste our time on 'trashy magazines'; and we wish that our children would *sometimes* read *something* instead of *living* at these everlasting 'pictures.' We can only lay claim to greater wisdom than our parents if we concede to our children greater wisdom than we possess. That is not altogether comforting. And yet, if we refrain from interfering with our children, perhaps they will refrain from interfering with us. Then, our predecessors being dead and our successors silent, we shall be able to do whatever seems right in our own eyes. "No man," said Dr. Johnson, "likes to live under the

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eye of perpetual disapprobation.” For the first time that eye will be removed. We can act on Michael Finsbury’s principle of entering a public-house, without excusing ourselves, if and when we want a drink. We may distantly admire the *Faerie Queen*, but we need not pretend to like it. We can profess our love for hot-water bottles without caring whether they are effeminate or not; and we can say, as we have long thought, that cold baths in the morning are an abomination and a danger to any man over twenty.

We can sleep, too, when and where we like, without springing up, snatching the coloured handkerchiefs from our faces and protesting that we were awake the whole time. There is nothing shameful in natural recuperation; sleep, as every doctor knows, is required to repair loss of tissue; and, unless you somnambulate or snore, you will add less to the sum of human misery by sleeping than by anything else that you can do. During the hours which you consecrate to oblivion, you will be unconscious that human misery exists; and there is nothing meritorious in remaining awake. It is only an irritating part of the ancestral tyranny that we ought all of us to be up and doing. Six hours’ sleep, it was ordained by these dolts, was enough for a woman, seven for a man, eight for a child and nine for a fool. They cited Napoleon, who was content with four hours a night; they made life hideous in the early morning by asserting that an hour before midnight was worth two afterwards. They talked to our women-kind about “beauty sleep.” They were intolerable.

And this feeble submission has survived till men and

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women, otherwise modest, make a boast of their inability to sleep.

"I heard four o'clock strike," they tell you, as though the whole world could not hear four o'clock strike if it were foolish enough to listen for it. "Not a wink the night before. I've been a martyr to insomnia ever since I was a child."

At the millennium, when each of us can do what is right in his own eyes, every one will be free to boast of his sufferings from insomnia or anything else; he must not, however, expect the slightest sympathy if he talks of martyrdom or makes a virtue of his defects. Let him eat a big luncheon, drink two glasses of port wine and sit in a large armchair before a hot fire. If he cannot sleep then, he had better consult a doctor or eat a bigger luncheon next day. So long as he gets twelve hours' sleep in every twenty-four, he need not become anxious about himself. If, however, he disapproves, on principle, of sleeping in the daytime, if he quotes hackneyed phrases about "brutish slumber", above all, if he protests that he heard everything you said and only closed his eyes because the light of the fire was tiring them after his broken night, then you may know that he does not deserve a millennium. The tyranny of his ancestors' ideals has proved too strong for him.

That strength I should be the last to minimize. After Michael Finsbury had entertained the down-hearted drawing-master at luncheon, he found it necessary to sleep off the effects. "I feel comparatively sober now," he proclaims on waking; but, when the clouds of incipient slumber begin once more to gather about him,

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he forsakes his habitual frankness and explains weakly that he has been sitting up with a sick friend.

It deceives no one; it is intended to deceive no one. Michael has already announced that, in case he does not make himself perfectly clear, it is best to explain that he has been lunching. It is a thing that might happen to any one.

But of Michael one expected something better.

AT SEA. 21 JANUARY, 1923.

Sooner or latter some one will compare the sea with a lake of molten sapphires. Last night I heard three people pestering the stars with their unwanted soliloquy and speaking of "diamonds hanging in festoons from a velvet sky." It is all a question of latitude. Some people talk like that the moment they have sighted their first flying-fish or entered their first drift of Sargasso weed.

"I wonder what it's like in England now," they muse. "I hope it's not a wicked thing to say, but I sometimes wish I could find a doctor who would order me abroad every year at this time."

"Fortunately or unfortunately," answered the Old Traveller, "that is my own position."

THE PERFECT DOCTOR

It is less in age than in experience and an incomparable knack of surrounding himself with comfort that my neighbour and friend is an old traveller. He is probably a few years younger than I am; but he has laid out

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his time and talents to better advantage. There is a private bathroom between his cabin and mine; I believe it should have been let to me, but the passage-clerk told me two months before we sailed that it had been engaged by the gentleman next door.

"You may be able to arrange with him," I was told.

"Oh, I'll use one of the ordinary bathrooms," I said. "If he's travelling with his wife, I don't want to interfere."

The passage-clerk consulted his plan of the ship:

"That's for you to say, sir. I think . . . yes, he has the double cabin to himself. His servant is next door. Travelling for his health, I fancy, sir."

"Then I certainly won't disturb him," I said, though, when we came out of our staterooms on the first night and nodded rather shyly, there was little enough of the invalid about him.

"Our friend X told me you would be on board," he began. "If you're by yourself, won't you join me? I've got a table for four, but the second steward has promised to let me have it to myself."

"That's uncommonly kind of you," I said. "Between ourselves, though I've nothing against these other people, I detest being put down among a lot of strangers. The nervous wear-and-tear of making conversation . . ."

"You'd be better off at home," he agreed. "D' you have to go abroad every winter?"

"Well, I *go*. Though I don't suppose it would kill me to stay in England . . ."

"One did it in the war," he answered; "but one paid for it. This is our table."

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Thanks to my companion's timely preparations, I had found my place and ordered my dinner before the rest of the passengers had disentangled themselves from the scrimmage round the second steward's table. I called for a wine-list; but my friend pointed smilingly to an ice-bucket from which a bottle of champagne was protruding.

"Really . . ." I began; and, if my voice betrayed diffidence, that was because I like some one else to experiment on ships' wine before I venture to taste it.

"This is some of my own," he explained. "My doctor said it would be safer to bring a case or two with me. D' you care about pheasants? I brought a few brace with me and one or two things from Fortnum's. This refrigerating business is a wonderful thing and all that; but food that has once been frozen loses all its vitamins."

The dinner, in Dr. Johnson's disparaging phrase, was well-enough, but it was not a dinner to *ask* a man to; with the exception of the pheasant, which was delicious. As I struggled with the pins and wet wool that were touched with life, at the Creation, and named whiting, I envied my friend his good fortune in having a doctor who forbade him this contemptible fish.

"Though life must become rather complicated," I said, as he waved away three courses in succession, "if you always have to carry your own food."

"Health," he answered with wistful gravity, "is worth a little trouble. And my servant sees to all the details."

At all times and in all places, but chiefly at sea during the first days of a voyage, man is distressingly prone

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to victimize an untried audience with a catalogue of physical disorders. From any one who is avowedly travelling for his health, with a trained attendant and a rigid diet, little hope can usually be expected. My new friend, however, was singularly—I had almost said ‘tantalizingly’—reserved; and, if I was interested to know what ailed him, I had to discover from unaided observation.

After two days I decided, for want of a better term, that he was suffering from nervous dyspepsia. His digestion was of the weakest, though champagne—which spells disaster to most victims of acidity—never upset him; and he was always ready for an *apéritif*, though he would say laughingly:

“This is against all orders. You must never tell my doctor. And, if anything goes wrong, my blood will be on your head.”

Whether the state of his nerves produced the dyspepsia or the dyspepsia reacted on his nerves, I could not determine. When other people made themselves ill by auto-suggestion, he proved himself an excellent sailor; but, as the others gained in strength, he seemed to sink deeper into the debility which I had noticed on our first day together. Though I hardly expected to meet him at breakfast, I found that he was never called until noon; and, as soon as luncheon was over, he went back to his cabin.

“Whether it does any good,” he murmured one day, uncertainly but with his customary patience, “I really can’t tell you. All the doctors *do* attach immense importance to resting the spine. . . .”

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Until that moment I had been wondering whether his heart was unsound. He was forbidden to take part in any deck-games; and, though he walked without assistance from the smoking-room to the saloon, he was never to be found perambulating the deck with the rest of the passengers. On the other hand, no doctor that I have met would have allowed a heart-patient to smoke quite so many strong cigars. He had brought his own humidor on board to keep them fresh; and I fancied, until I tasted my first, that they might have been denicotinized. He explained, however, that he smoked them green because it was next to impossible for matured cigars to keep their condition in sea-air.

"My man has a sort of electric cooker," he added. "If you'd like to shove your cigars in there, you'll be very welcome. It's not altogether satisfactory, though."

My friend's man was almost as enigmatic as my friend. His qualities as a valet were self-evident; but, in addition, I have met no one with as ready a sympathy or as thoughtful a consideration. Before a boat-drill was announced, he had secured from the captain leave of absence for his master; you could always tell the most sheltered part of the deck when you found it occupied by the Berbice chair and down cushions which soon roused so much envy among the other passengers; and this devoted creature had an uncanny power of divining who was likely to fret his charge's taut nerves. From the first I was privileged; but I have seen the space round the Berbice chair protected or cleared as though it were holy ground.

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This devotion was only matched by the discretion that accompanied it.

"About the same, sir; about the same," was the unvarying answer to an enquiry that soon became unvarying.

I had once hazarded such questions as: Had he been long like this? Was it something inherited?

"He's always about the same," answered the servant; and I felt rebuked for my curiosity.

My indiscretion could not have been reported, for my friend's manner to me increased daily in its charming cordiality. If I had myself been an invalid, I could not have fared more delicately nor benefited more generously by the dispositions which my friend had made for his own comfort. As we neared our first port-of-call, he invited me to go ashore with him and lunch at the club. He was a member and would be glad to put me up.

"It will be a pleasant change to get some decent food," he added, though every other man and woman on board had better reason for welcoming a change.

"I'll see about getting one of these boats," I said, when we had been given *pratique*.

"That launch looks as if it was intended for me," he answered. "I mustn't hurry, you know."

Though we were the last to leave the ship, we were the first to land. Through a yelling mob of cabmen, my friend piloted me to a private car; and we drove for ten miles to the country club, where luncheon was waiting as soon as we had bathed. Afterwards we played a round of golf, bathed again, dined and drove

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back to the quay in time to leave last and arrive first on board.

"Next time, you must come with me," I said as we parted at his cabin-door. "There's a very fair hotel at this next island."

"I should like that," he answered. "We shall be there in . . . two days, I think?"

When the agent came on board, however, my plans were laid in ruins. The most hospitable—and, at the same time, the most tiresome—man in the western hemisphere had apparently taken possession of the hotel and was doing the honours of the island. I must, he wrote, lunch with him and bring any friends I liked; he would be waiting on the jetty with a car; and he would take no refusal.

"I know the man; and you don't," I told my friend. "I must go myself, because he'll kidnap me as soon as I land; but I'm not going to let you in for this."

"We'll postpone our luncheon to a happier occasion," he laughed. "At the same time—it's no business of mine—why you should lunch with a man who you know is going to bore you . . ."

"I've no excuse," I answered.

"Make one."

"But he knows I'm on board. It's unlikely that I should have any other engagement in this part of the world . . ."

"Say you're ill."

"I happen to know the ship's doctor is lunching with him."

"The ship's doctor is not *your* doctor," my friend

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pointed out with sudden warmth. "You've not consulted him. He knows nothing about you. I believe your own doctor would *prefer* you to stay on board; he'd *forbid* you to go out in this heat. He'd disapprove, in the strongest terms, of all that your friend will give you to eat and drink. And, with your nerves in their present state, he wouldn't *let* you be victimized by the first bore who chooses to put an invitation to your head. . . . I *do* know something about doctors." . . .

I went to the nearest writing-table and embarked on an improbable account of the tyrannical and fussy doctor who made life a burden to me. "*What can one do?*" I ended. "*It's no good consulting a man if you're going to disobey his orders. You know what Simpson is . . .*"

Then it occurred to me that I was courting future trouble by using my doctor's name.

"By the way, who's *your* man?", I asked my friend.

His impetuous manner deserted him; and I thought he suspected me of wanting to use the name for improper purposes.

"You wouldn't know him," he muttered.

"I might. Anyway, I've thought for some time of making a change."

"You wouldn't remember his address if I gave it you."

"Tell me his name; and I can look it up in the directory."

"He's not in the directory."

"Well, tell me his name."

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My friend shook his head and changed the subject by suggesting that we should have an *apéritif*, if I would take the responsibility for any ill-effects.

"By all means," I said. "But, if I'm to invent a doctor who's to forbid me to accept this invitation, I must invent a name for him."

"Take any name you like."

"Harris?", I propounded. "Dr. Harris?"

"A perfect name."

"For the perfect doctor. Come on." . . .

AT SEA. 22 JANUARY, 1923.

Yesterday we were in the doldrums. You may picture a belt of lead-coloured, oily sea, studded with becalmed sailing-ships drifting helplessly in search of the trades; and you may fancy an atmosphere of still, oppressive heat, with an invisible sun dealing out strokes of death to the unwary. That is a more or less conventional idea of the doldrums; and, apart from the sailing-ships, that has been more or less my experience of the doldrums whenever I have passed this way before. Yesterday, however, was just such a wet, cold and windy day as you might meet in any windy, cold, wet part of the world. Those who had packed their warm clothes made haste to unpack them; the decks were deserted; divine worship in the saloon, which at least was dry and sheltered, won an unexpected popularity.

Driven indoors and penned at close quarters, we stared morosely at one another and tried to discover anything of interest in the faces, the conversation, the

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mannerisms and the confessions of our neighbours. By now, alas, the edge of strangeness has worn blunt; we have lost our mystery; we have degenerated, as in every ship we degenerate, into

CERTAIN UNCHANGING TYPES

On the poop of a Phœnician trader, six well-to-do citizens of Tyre sat huddled under the silk awning while a sudden squall lashed the sea to a dull grey. One, the local manager of the Standard Bank of Bursa, was returning to his post after a month's leave in the hills about Lebanon; another, travelling in dyes and Sidon piece-goods, had booked to Massilia and was there transshipping for the Pillars of Hercules and the island of Britain. The rest were doing the round trip; they had called at Jaffa and Alexandria; now they were coasting to Carthage.

Hitherto, cordial relations had been maintained among the six, thanks chiefly to their settled policy of not seeing too much of one another. During the first days of the voyage, the mother of the one girl on board had indeed thrust her daughter a shade too prominently forward; but every one had expected that, and the older travellers were well able to look after themselves. The florid man, who was rather ostentatiously accompanied by an amanuensis, boasted a little tiresomely about his "place" in the country and the difficulty of buying good slaves. From his way of talking, any one would have fancied him to be an ornament of the Phœnician aristocracy; but the commercial traveller pricked his pretensions by recalling, with of-

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fensive particularity, the days when they were boys together in the same warehouse. The late war, it was explained, had been his opportunity; but he was no better than any other profiteer and he only brought a secretary with him because he had never learned how to spell and was too old to begin now. The blood of the secretary, on the other hand, was among the purplest in the land; but he was a younger son, and the family had been crippled by taxation.

The rain, by breaking down the calculated self-isolation of the passengers, broke down with it their late superficial cordiality.

"I *do* think the company ought to have a second class on these boats," grumbled the mother of the one girl on board. "I don't want to be a snob; but, when one is put next to a commercial traveller and expected to treat him as an equal . . ."

"It's a bit thick," agreed her daughter, who tried to atone for the defects of her intelligence by the sprightliness of her colloquialisms. "Still, he's an improvement on the ghastly creature next to me, who talks food, food, food the livelong day. I don't wonder he's sent abroad for his health."

"And *doesn't* he mean to get the last ounce out of the company! It's a curious thing about the middle classes . . ."

On the other side of the poop, the bank-manager was chuckling obscenely over a whispered conversation with the profiteer.

"You know that one about the young lady of Sidon?" he asked.

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“‘Who had stripped to the buff to be tried on’?”, quoted the profiteer. “Yes. . . . I heard one just before I came away, which I believe is quite new. A man was going out to dinner; and, when he reached the house, he asked the charioteer how much the clock shewed . . .”

The rest of the tale was inaudible; and, at the end, the bank manager gasped weakly:

“Oh, *jolly* good! Lord, if I could only remember all the stories I’ve heard . . .”

At a safe distance from the others, the profiteer’s secretary was analysing the passenger-list for the benefit of the hypochondriac.

“From her accent, I should say she’s the wife of a midland manufacturer,” he opined, with a swift glance towards the mother of the one girl on board. “They go abroad every year: Mycenæ, Cnossus, Croton. Trying to marry the girl off, I suppose. They’ll have their work cut out.”

“Well, you’re an eligible young bachelor,” laughed the hypochondriac.

“I should like to see my father’s face if I told him I intended to marry *her*!”

“I should think it must go against the grain with you to work for a man like the profiteer?”

“Well, he’s the commonest human being I’ve ever met; but, thank goodness, he *knows* it. It’s the *airs* those two women give themselves that I can’t stand. There was no end of a scene the first night because they were at the same table as the commercial traveller. If *we* have to put up with *them*, I don’t see why *they* should

From Avonmouth to Barbados

complain of having to put up with *him*. I find him quite an interesting little creature."

The hypochondriac was more than a little flattered to find himself classed with the purple-blooded secretary by no less a person than the purple-blooded secretary himself.

"He does n't pretend to be anything more than he is," he answered; "though some of his stories strike me as being a bit tall. He was telling me last night that the people in Britain paint their bodies instead of wearing clothes. I think he was only trying to pull my leg, but one or two men took him quite seriously."

"So long as a man lies artistically . . ." yawned the profiteer's private secretary. "I wish this damned rain would stop. The worst of these small boats is that you're all thrown so close together."

"I could stand that if the catering were a bit better," complained the hypochondriac. "I don't know whether you tried any of that brawn for breakfast. There are n't many things that I *can* eat, worse luck: if I touch shell-fish, for instance . . . Lord, the half-pay colonel is off again!"

At the sound of one dreaded and indefatigable voice, the group under the awning separated in all directions. It was worth a wetting to escape the loud confidences of a man who was ready to talk from dawn to dusk about the most wearisome trivialities of his daily life.

"Whenever I buy a new pair of sandals," he was explaining to a circle of inattentive backs, "I always have the soles scratched to keep them from slipping. I once nearly had a nasty accident; and now the first

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thing I do when I get a new pair of sandals home is to say to one of my slaves: 'See that the soles are properly scratched . . .'

Alone now and flushed with anger, the profiteer leaned over the rail at the end of the poop and stared into the waist of the ship. The wind had fallen, and the sails hung lifeless and dejected. The rowers were being hunted on to their benches; and the eye of the old employer of labour kindled at their slow movements.

"Lazy dogs!", he growled. "Fat, pampered lap-dogs." The slaves were chained together in couples; and at a sudden lurch of the ship two of them fell and hung suspended, one on either side of a heavy ash sweep. "Get up!", roared the profiteer. "Ah, that's the stuff to give them!"

The overseer was advancing slowly down the high gangway between the rowers' benches. His long whip flicked idly at the scarred backs to right and left; but, when he saw the slaves hanging by the chains from their wrists and ankles, he quickened his pace. The lash sang through the air and fell with a thud; two shrill screams were followed by a second thud; and, as the lash rose again, it scattered a spray of new blood.

"That's the only argument those brutes understand," puffed the profiteer. "And, if I had my way, I would n't stop at the slaves: I'd give a taste of whip to all the clever young gentlemen who talk about the 'rights' of slaves. 'Rights' indeed! If they'd ever had a big business to manage . . . They'll be talking about abolishing slavery next."

Though he was talking only to himself, the profiteer's

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voice carried to the quarter-deck, where the captain was pacing up and down beside the helmsman. The profiteer would have liked to be invited to the quarter-deck, but the captain knew from long experience the charms of solitude. He had been in the service of the company for thirty-five years, like his father and grandfather before him; he had sailed this course for ten years; and he knew that the types on shipboard are unchanging. They embarked with the same diffidence and suspicion; they criticized one another in the same terms; they chattered about themselves; they quizzed and quarrelled. If he gave them the chance, they asked him the same infantile questions. *Would* they have time to get up to the Pyramids? *Was* there anything to see at Carthage?

The captain paused in his walk to stare at the discontented group under the silk awning. It had been the same in the days of his father and grandfather; it would be the same in the days of his son and grandson. Ships might change; but those who sailed in them, and the sea on which they sailed, never changed. In one, two, three thousand years' time . . .

Two thousand years later, the newest and biggest ship of the Crown and Anchor Line ran unexpectedly into a patch of cold, wet weather. The passengers, driven indoors, sat sullenly in the smoking-room or on the glazed verandah. At eleven o'clock the captain set out on his daily inspection, making it as brief as possible for fear of being drawn into conversation which he had heard so often before. ("Shall we have time

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to get up from Cristobal to the Canal? Why don't we stay longer at Barbados?" He and his father and grandfather had all served the sea; so, for all he knew, had his great-grandfather; you might, indeed, go back to the days of the Phœnicians. . . .

On the verandah, the captain heard a lady telling her daughter that, though the ship was comfortable enough in its way, the company was undeniably rather mixed.

"I have to be so careful," said a hypochondriac voice. "If I had n't brought my own food with me, I should have starved . . . literally."

"Little Bright-Eyes does n't seem to be getting off," said a superior young man. "This is her last chance." . . .

"The first thing I'd do would be to abolish these trades unions," growled an employer of labour. "I can tell you, your soul is not your own. The next thing, I fully expect, will be that these agitators will insist on having a representative on the board; we shall be told by these gentry how much profit we may earn." . . .

In the smoking-room a short, red man, fat and creased as an Indian idol, looked round cautiously and lowered his voice.

"Do you," he asked his companion, "know that one about the young lady of Nijni-Novgorod? . . ."

AT SEA. 23 JANUARY, 1923.

After ten days at sea, we have most of us finished the books which we brought on board; and we are now

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effecting exchanges with our friends. Usually, however, the taste of our friends is deplorable; and, as for the books in the saloon library, we can only imagine that the library has been formed from the gradual accretion of books which disgusted passengers decided were simply not worth packing again. They were offered, perhaps, to the bedroom stewards . . . and politely declined; perhaps they were flung overboard and blown back. There they are, anyway. And, meanwhile, this year as every year, we have not brought enough books of our own. The problem should not be insoluble. Our space, of course, is restricted; but every man must have his

IRREDUCIBLE MINIMUM OF BOOKS

"All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf," suggested Bishop Bloughram by way of giving his young friend Gigadibs enough rope to hang himself; and there were to be the "little Greek books with the funny type they get up well at Leipsic", not to mention a Correggio and a slabbed marble bath. When "the literary man" had been committed to an unpractical list of what was indispensable, the bishop dropped on him with a reminder that the area of his cabin measured only six feet by six; and there is a spiteful imaginary picture of Gigadibs' discomfiture as the pretentious trappings are hoisted overboard.

"You've shewn your good taste," the bishop indicates; "we shall know you anywhere for a high-brow; but your list won't work."

On more modern ships you can stow books innumer-

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able in the hold; and you can exercise your legs and your patience every morning by a visit to the baggage-room, which has always been closed for the day five minutes before you arrive. In general, however, Gigadibs' problem is ours; we want the irreducible minimum of books for our stateroom; and Bishop Bloughram affords no more help to us than to his literary friend. "*All Balzac's novels*", indeed!

Had Browning ever read them? Has any one, except Mr. Saintsbury and Mr. George Moore and Mr. Yeats and Mr. Walkley and Mr. G. H. Mair? "The new edition fifty volumes long", I mean, which Bloughram quotes? I once did, on the principle that you must read the whole of a man's work before you can judge him and before you can be sure which books you would rather die than read again. I love Balzac more than any other French writer of the nineteenth century; but, if I take that "new edition fifty volumes long" on board with me, I shall present about thirty-five to my bedroom-steward; and, if he politely declines them, they shall go into the ship's library, there to baffle and exasperate future travellers so long as this ship's name shall appear in *Lloyd's Register*.

And, if I take any Greek texts with me, they shall be of the Loeb Classical Library, with a translation on the opposite page. "*Greek scholars*," said the professor in *Major Barbara*, "*are privileged men. Few of them know Greek; and none of them know anything else.*" In time, if you neglect your Greek sufficiently, you will outgrow this reproach and shed this privilege; I should be almost helpless nowadays with an unannotated Leip-

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sic text. And so would any proper man. If you go to the Bradfield Greek Play, I prophesy that you will not find one Leipsic text among all the hundreds where-with the scholarly audience comes armed. The books you see there are 'versions', 'renderings', 'translations' or, if you prefer it, 'cribs'; and the fearful joy which you observe on the faces of the bishops, cabinet ministers and small fry in the theatre comes from the delicious sense that, for the first time in their lives, they are using a crib under the headmaster's very eye.

We can therefore begin without the embarrassment of having to follow any of Bishop Bloughram's deceitful suggestions.

Every one has played the game of choosing the one, two or three books which he would take with him if he were cast up on a desert island. It was Lord Macaulay, I am very sure, who invented the game in the hope of appeasing his insatiable hunger for class-lists; every one plays it in the hope of shewing off his erudition and in the fear that he will otherwise be compelled to play a yet more foolish game; all say "The Bible, of course; and Shakespeare . . ."; and then the trouble begins. One man boasts rashly that he already knows the Bible; another wants to be sure whether *The Decline and Fall* can count as a single book; and some woman of practical mind votes for *HOW TO DO IT: A HAND-BOOK OF ADVICE FOR THOSE WHO ARE CAST UP ON DESERT ISLANDS*.

No two players agree on the same list. Even the Bible and Shakespeare, though they are returned without a contest, contain too much and too little. If I may

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have *Bel* and *Susannah*, any one may have Joel and Amos; and I hope that the bread-fruit may fail on my desert-island and the one brackish spring run dry before I am compelled to read again *Pericles: Prince of Tyre*. Golly, what a play!

It is not, however, for a Christian Englishman to quarrel with the first two of these three. And the third?

So much depends on individual memory. Your Macaulays who know their *Paradise Lost* by heart can carry whole libraries in their heads. *The Pickwick Papers*, *Handley Cross*, *The Wrong Box* and *The Dolly Dialogues*; if you get less than full marks on each and all, you are to be pitied and perhaps despised; but after a month on your desert island you will have no excuse. So with *Gibbon's Memoirs of My Life and Writings*, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *Stalky and Co.* . . . In fact, whether you limit yourself to three books or take all that your cabin will hold, you must eliminate the books you really know.

Until the late regrettable growth of an imperial spirit, in the comfortable days when an overseas dominion could be called a colony (or worse), the continent of Australia existed in the scheme of the average English traveller as the destination of a voyage long enough for the whole of Gibbon. You retired to your cabin at Tilbury with the first volume; and you closed the seventh as you reached Sydney (or Perth or Adelaide). When your ship turned round, you turned round with her, retiring to your cabin at Adelaide (or Perth or Sydney) with the first volume . . .

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The first volume of what? I have never heard what you were supposed to read on your way home. Gibbon, of all men, bears rereading at short intervals, but you do not want to make a habit of him. Carlyle's *Fredrick the Great*, in ten volumes, might keep you quiet until you berthed again at Tilbury; or it might have an exactly and disastrously opposite effect. You might read Milman's *History of Latin Christianity* as an antidote to Gibbon; or you might not. Gibbon rather spoils your palate for Milman; and it is always possible that you read him at school. This, indeed, applies equally to Gibbon and Carlyle, even to Sir James Frazer and his baker's-dozen volumes of *The Golden Bough*. Then you must find your consolation in reflecting that you have neither need nor excuse for visiting Australia.

Between the books that you know too well and the great standard unread, without which no gentleman's library is complete, you are in a bad case. And yet there *must* be an irreducible minimum. During the war, many a man found it for himself as every post brought him new books and every day dawned with the same demand that something, new or old, must be left out of that hundred and twenty pounds of kit.

"In France," said one collector of battle-fronts, "I had more books than I could read, but I had to cut them down when I went to Gallipoli. They accumulated again in Palestine; but in Mesopotamia—the heat there made you very careful about carrying unnecessary weight—I came down to one. Browning. That thin-paper edition."

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"The complete works?"

"But of course!"

The Bible, then, and Shakespeare and Browning, with humble thanks to providence, if you have a retentive memory, and a decent but idle regret for your misspent youth that you have not more to remember. By "the Bible" is to be understood "the Bible and the Apocrypha", otherwise you will miss *Bel and Sussannah*. And your Shakespeare need not include *Pericles* or *Troilus and Cressida* or *Titus Andronicus*. Indeed, if you will deny yourself these, you might be allowed one other book in substitution. However well you know your Miss Austen, you have probably not mastered the intricacies of her geography; and, however glibly you may quote *The Wrong Box*, you have assuredly not calculated—in reputed quarts—how much "indifferent liquor" Michael Finsbury consumed before the "glorious conclusion" of his holiday. You do not know how much claret and water the faithful Teena permitted him at dinner; you cannot say—though you may be sure his "affable kinsman" Morris kept a sharp look-out—how much of the still champagne was spilt on the carpet. You do not really know the book. . . .

AT SEA. 24 JANUARY, 1923.

We are drawing near to our first port-of-call; and those of us who listen to our conscience have been busy writing to our relations and friends. So little happens on board ship that it is still hard to fill four sheets; and

From Avonmouth to Barbados

our relations and friends must not blame us if the first page is given up to small, material things. Our state-room is on the port side: a double one for our single use. The ship as a whole . . . The food . . . Our fellow-passengers . . . The officers . . . It is boring stuff, this common-form description of a routine-life which will be over long before all these letters reach England. Perhaps we shall be able to let ourselves go on the second page. . . .

The first letter is not too bad. The second would be as good as the first if we wrote it in the same terms; but we are perhaps enslaved to that quality of style known to the masters of rhetoric as

ELEGANT VARIETY

Whether one concept can be expressed equally well in more ways than one is a question over which the critics in every age have been divided. There is, according to one school, an absolute perfection: if you try to find other and better words for the nightingale's song "that oft-times hath charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn", you will fail in your quest or you will discover that you have embodied a different idea from Keats'. You will have achieved something less than perfection; or you will have begotten perfection of another kind.

Against this opinion it is urged by the other school that the most copious and subtile of modern languages must be capable of expressing one idea in several ways, each as good as the next. By means of elegant varia-

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tion, it is maintained, you arrest your reader's attention with the wealth at your command. To say that "of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed ten thousand" is terse, vigorous and to the point; to repeat that the same fate overtook the same number in several other tribes is merely monotonous. In reports of cricket matches, you are content to be told once that a ball was hit to the boundary: after that, you long to find the ball described as a sphere and to be told that it was propelled over the frontier. Or so the reporters think.

In correspondence, this elegant variation becomes not only a pleasure but a duty. If you are writing to six people by the same mail, you have to remember that, if you ask A to give a message to B, you will hear, when it is too late, that A and B have not met for months; if you write to B, A will rather officiously and quite superfluously send on his own letter to shew that he has heard from you; if you tell the same story to A, B, C, D, E and F, all six will meet at luncheon and compare notes.

"Our friend seems to be having good weather," A will begin.

"Oh, you've heard from him?", asks B. "I had a letter too. He told me *rather* a delicious story about one woman on board. They were having a fancy-dress ball . . ."

"He told me that, too," interrupt C, D, E and F.

A story becomes no worse for being told to six people; but, if it is made to seem your only story, you resent this implied poverty of invention. And your gay, impromptu way of telling it loses its spontaneity when

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your friends head you off fancy-dress balls for fear you will yield to your obsession and tell your one, invariable, ghastly story. . . . Anything more intimate than a casual anecdote is proportionately more dangerous. A hostess who is arranging trains for a house-party should not write to more than one guest: "*I have been so terribly lonely down here; but ever since I knew that you would be coming . . .*" Some men are careless; and such letters are sometimes forwarded from one guest to another with the endorsement: "*You'll see she wants us to come by the 3.40; but, if you can get away in the morning, I'll motor you down.*" . . .

There is no reason why one story should not do duty with all your correspondents if, as must happen occasionally, it is the only one you can recall at the moment and if you serve it with elegant variation. The bones of the story are given in the first letter; the flesh in the second; the hide, hooves and hair in the third. They may then meet, these friends of yours, and discuss your story to their hearts' content: A quotes the bald, unconvincing narrative; B adds corroborative detail; C achieves the artistic verisimilitude. And your story improves with time, as you strengthen the weak places.

"*I never apologized for being so late last night,*" wrote one exponent of elegant variation during the war. "*A man came to see me just as I was going up to dress; and I simply couldn't get rid of him.*" . . .

To her next correspondent she was more explicit:

"*A funny thing happened last night. I was just going up to dress, when I was told a man wanted to see*

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me. He was in uniform—Canadian, I think—and he'd been robbed of all his money. Why he came to me I couldn't make out till he explained that he'd known my brother in Saskatchewan." . . .

Dramatic possibilities began to take shape in her third letter:

"I had the fright of my life two nights ago. I was alone in the house with my maid, just going up to dress for dinner, when the biggest Canadian I've ever seen insisted on forcing his way into the drawing-room. I think he must have been drunk; otherwise, he'd never have dared to do it. 'I want some money,' he announced, 'more than that, I shan't go till I get it. I believe you had a brother out in Saskatchewan; he'll tell you I'm a straight sort of chap.' . . . And so on. I didn't know what to do. Then I had a sudden inspiration. There was a big fire in the drawing-room; and, as he talked, I pretended to poke it. As a matter of fact, I left the poker between the bars till it was white-hot and then snatched it out. 'If you know my brother,' I said, 'he'll tell you the sort of woman I am.' Then I walked slowly towards him till the poker was within a foot of his chest. I've never seen a man run faster." . . .

The dramatic possibilities, explored in the third letter, were exploited in the fourth:

"When you have only maids in the house, you should tell them to be very careful about the people they let in. I had an experience last week that would have given many women a very unpleasant scare. A drunken Canadian forced his way in and demanded money. As

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I hardly came up to his waist, you can imagine how helpless I felt. Fortunately, I kept my head; and, while he was talking, I quietly heated the poker. Then I turned on him! You may be sure he didn't stay very long; but, before he went I'm glad to say I'd left my mark on him." . . .

The fifth letter differed from the fourth only in the postscript:

"My maid came into the drawing-room to say she'd noticed a smell of burning. 'That is singed Canadian', I told her." . . .

The Canadian, once flung flaming down with hideous ruin and combustion, could hardly be pressed into service again, even to adorn a tale. One more letter remained to be written; but the exponent of elegant variation was by now obsessed by her theme:

"I'm sure," she wrote, "you've heard about my tussle with the Canadian giant. For some reason everybody's talking about it. I suppose you haven't heard the sequel? One oughtn't to laugh, but in some ways it really is too ludicrous. A friend of mine was calling at the Canadian Officers' Hospital when she heard a man telling the most extraordinary story. I think he'd been wounded in the head; anyway, he was liable to loss of memory and always carried a pocket-book to remind him of his own name and address and the names of one or two friends who could help him if he was taken ill. I need hardly tell you that I'd never heard of his existence; but George knew him out in Saskatchewan and gave him a letter to me when he came over with Princess Patricia's Regiment. Here's

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his story, in his own words so far as I remember them. 'I was on the corner of Oxford Street and Park Lane when I felt one of my attacks coming on. I was looking for a cab to take me back to hospital when I found I'd no money for the fare. Instead of jumping in and getting the money from somebody there, I thought I'd borrow it from a lady who lived in Seymour Street. I didn't know her; but her brother was my greatest friend and he'd said that she'd do anything in the world for me. In I went. She was just going to dress for dinner. I said I wouldn't keep her a moment if she'd be so very kind as to oblige me with the loan of five shillings. I don't know whether I didn't make myself clear (I was feeling pretty rotten, I can tell you). All I know is that she suddenly went for me with a poker, pretty well red-hot. The woman must be a homicidal maniac. She ought to have some one to look after her.' . . . My dear, have you ever heard anything so dreadful? What can one do? How can I ever look George in the face again?" . . .

Some critics hold that there is but one perfect form for any one concept; they may be right. Others maintain that, in the hands of a master and with the resources of a copious language, one idea may be expressed in many ways; they, too, may be right. The same story can certainly be told in six different modes to six different people. A bald and unconvincing narrative about a Canadian officer remains, in essence, the same; though elegant variation may add corroborative detail to lend it artistic verisimilitude.

From Avonmouth to Barbados

AT SEA. 25 JANUARY, 1923.

Last night there was a fancy-dress dinner and dance on board. The members of our company transformed themselves into Cardinal Wolseys, Moors of Venice, Robinson Crusoes, Scarlet Pimpernels, penguins, wasps, elephants, cowboys, pierrots and ballet-dancers. The curmudgeons who were too lazy or too self-conscious to disguise themselves entered into the spirit of the revels to the extent of indicating that the presence of a green pocket-handkerchief marked them as citizens of the Free State, while its absence made plain to the least intelligent that they were English gentlemen (period George the Fifth) in undress evening uniform.

I was surprised at the variety and excellence of the costumes. Those which were made on board must have cost endless ingenuity and trouble; and some had been brought on board, of malice aforethought. I had always been told that, if the descendants of Cromwell and Wellington took pride in anything, it was a perverse pride in their hatred and contempt for

DRESSING UP

“‘What is life,’ passionately exclaimed a French philosopher, ‘without the pleasures of disguise’?”

Michael Finsbury withheld the name of his authority, deeming it, perhaps, too well-known to be given, but he emphasized the philosopher's nationality; and I hope I am not uncharitable in suspecting him of contempt for a race that only discarded its stove-pipe hats, foulard ties and red ribbons of the Légion d'Honneur

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in order to array itself in the more abandoned dress of a carnival. The English detest carnivals; they loathe making themselves conspicuous; and they are never quite certain what may happen to them if they let go of their everyday personality. At best, if they be elder brethren of Trinity House, they may be mistaken for harbour-masters; at worst, they may fling aside with their conventional clothes the moral restraints and the religious scruples that go with Sunday best: they may . . . , well, they may misconduct themselves just like William Dent Pitman under the combined influence of a salutary shave, a low-cut shirt and a pair of offensive little gaiters.

For the enlightenment of the foreigner it may be explained that an Englishman does not make himself conspicuous, when, like the Duke of Wellington, he is the only man undecorated amid a blaze of stars and orders; he does not detest carnivals any the less because he supports a cause such as the Three Arts Club; and, if he seems to go berserk in a place like Nice, he is only doing in Rome as the Romans do. What would you have?

In his own country he becomes conscious that the blood of the puritans, however much intermixed, still flows in his veins. In the brave days he would have been whipped at the cart's tail—and rightly!—if he had tricked himself out for sinful vanity's sake; he would forego the laurels of Garrick if their price were a painted face. To clap a hump on your back and call yourself Richard III! It is bad enough when the descendants of Richard's peers have to make themselves

From Avonmouth to Barbados

ridiculous with coronets and robes; but, with all our faults, we love our king; and, if he summon us to his coronation, if he invest us with Garter, Thistle or Patrick, we cannot disobey his command nor decline the honour he would shew us. However much intermixed, the blood of the royalists flows yet in our veins.

The difference between ourselves and the rest of the world is that we dress up when we must, not when we can. The blood of Whittington may flow in our veins; but, unless we have a place in the civic hierarchy, we cannot help feeling that these aldermen and sheriffs look very absurd with their furs and chains. As for the Masons, with their monstrous aprons depending over their monstrous stomachs, we have no patience with them, unless we are Masons ourselves: then we have no choice, for we are bound by the rules of an order. To some extent, a man has to dress, as he has to live, against his inclinations: if he wears Leander colours at Henley, it is not because he cares to shew that he was an oarsman fifty years ago; it is just expected of him, and he would not like any one to think that he was ashamed of his club.

As in everything else, the Englishman accommodates himself to what is required of him; but he never dresses up, like a foreigner, for the fun of the thing. And, though a man — under the influence of the finest liqueur brandy in Great Britain — may amuse himself by simulating the walk of a Sepoy colonel revisiting the scenes of childhood, an Englishman does not naturally or comfortably assume an alien personality. Once again, it is not expected of him: William the Waiter broke down

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when he found his son, an eminent K. C., disguised in a false nose.

In spite of the moralists, the clothes do make the man; and the pig-headed moralist who contradicts that statement reveals that he has never set foot inside a Turkish bath. Had he stood in the hall of one on any day of the late war, he would have seen bristling field-m Marshals and blistering admirals, shambling cabinet-ministers and bloated captains of industry; with a cavalry swing or a quarter-deck roll, with a flash of gilt epaulettes or a jingle of silver spurs, they burst through the swing-doors and were brought up short by the order that here and not elsewhere they must remove and leave their boots. Shaken but still distinctive, they proceeded to the apodyterium and retired into curtained alcoves; later, with straining towels about their middles, they struggled for precedence and for the honour of their services into the vapour-room; later still, they sat in fierce, opposing rows of wicker chairs, glowering over evening papers.

And then, in the strict order of their coming—the nude midshipman sailing across the bows of a nude admiral—, they were laid on level slabs of marble, there to be soaped and rinsed and rubbed and spanked: naked as they came into the world, naked as they shall go out, equal at last before their creator and the *masseur*; with no false dignity and less than no false modesty; differing one from another only in adipose deposit and watching that last difference disappearing under the merciless hands of the rubber.

After the cold plunge they were wrapped in similar

From Avonmouth to Barbados

towels and laid to sleep like foundling children. Waking, they called for coffee or vermouth; but their manner held little enough of the quarter-deck or the cabinet-room. Uniformity deadened their souls and dimmed their courage; not until they had paddled in their socks to the entrance-hall did they recover a personality. There is more than a rhetorical symbolism in the jack-boots of supermen. Quivering in the recoil from their own salutes, the subaltern and the midshipman would then surrender their taxis; the admiral and the field-marshal would vie in offering them to the cabinet-minister; and, had a Napoleon of the press been bathing, it is likely that he would have driven away while the others walked.

Disguise, in spite of the French philosopher, has no pleasures; it is sometimes necessary, sometimes useful, but always absurd and usually objectionable. Any one can be a Mason; any one can go to a fancy-dress ball; any graduate of the university of Oxford can wear a black-and-red silk hood. . . .

At least, he can buy himself one at considerable expense; it may be the only distinctive dress that he owns; he might, to some extent, change his personality and acquire the spirit of a gentle scholar if he were given a chance of wearing it occasionally. He never is.

But for our hatred of dressing-up, that would be abominably unfair. . . .

We are in sight of land, for the first time in fourteen days.

PART TWO

FROM BARBADOS TO KINGSTON

PART TWO

From Barbados to Kingston

AT SEA. 28 JANUARY, 1923.

Whenever I have written 'January', I have to assure myself that I am not making an error of six months in my date. Can you, in England, believe that there are places where a man may wander, barefoot and in the thinnest pyjamas, at half-past five in the last days of January, warmed right through by the soft air of a tropical morning, waiting for the sun to rise?

BARBADOS AND TRINIDAD

A brief fortnight ago we were shivering in wools and furs. Then, as the sea changed from grey to blue, we remembered that sunshine lay ahead of us. West and south of the Azores, we met it; in the Sargasso Sea the sun-helmets came out; and now, though we shall have to return some time, it is hard to realize that we were ever cold or shall ever be cold again.

Ever cold or ever tired. From Avonmouth to Barbados we seemed to share the Atlantic with a single homeward-bound oil-tanker. Even the Western Islands were

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passed in the night; and, after leaving the Bristol Channel, we saw no land till the low line of Barbados appeared on the horizon. When you are cold or ill or worried or unhappy, ten days of hot sunshine, without ships or land in sight, will cure you or prove you incurable. At Barbados I knew that I should see the first hibiscus and poinsettia and bougainvillea of the year. And, though the island looks flat from the sea, you will find some respectable heights from which you may enjoy one or two of the loveliest views in the world. If you have been there before, you will find friends; if you have never been there before, the friends of your friends will make you their friend and lavish upon you the inexhaustible hospitality of the West Indies.

As you drop anchor, the negro harbour-police—in the round hats and white blouses of Nelson's day, lacking only a pig-tail—row out and rest on their oars till the quarantine-flag has been hauled down. Without their protection, every ship would be boarded and stormed by the boat-boys who race out to ply for hire and by the divers who flash in and out of their coracles to return with your sixpence in their mouth. Two years ago, this was work for boys; but last year the profession was thrown open to one girl, and this year I observed two. Thanks to the police, the row-boats are kept at a distance; and their owners stand in a clamant circle, clasping the name-boards to their chests and asseverating at full blast that there is no boat in all Barbados to compare with the *Mayflower*, or the *Anna* or the *Rose*.

When I was in America, some years ago, I found

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that, by a diplomatic exchange of courtesy, the English were only interested in the American colour-question and that the Americans only cared to know what would be the end of the Irish difficulty. "These negroes, who are increasing so rapidly . . .," began the one side. "These Irish. . .," interpolated the other. "If we could sweep them all away," they agreed in effect, "it *would* be grand!" The colour-question in Barbados, more than in any other island of the West Indies, is the colour-question of the southern states. Here there is no intermarrying; and, if any one try to break the rule, he drops out of the white community and is rejected by the black; his children live in a half-world of mulattoes, and his place knows him no more. In the other islands, you will be wise to avoid discussions of colour, for you may be sitting next to a quadroon or octaroon without knowing it; but in Barbados you are safe, for the colour-bar is insuperable. This, however, brings you no nearer to solving the colour-question. The transplanted West African negro, emancipated and admitted to the political franchise, lingers into the twentieth century as the punishment which history has inflicted on civilization for the greed of our forefathers.

Your boat's crew may seem, if you are squeamish about other colours than your own, to be hardly human; but they are your free fellow-subjects of King George the Fifth. You cannot ship them in bulk to Monrovia or Haiti. You cannot live with them or without them. You can only hand your problem on from the twentieth century to the twenty-first. Meanwhile, a new clamant circle has formed on the quay; and a dozen voices are

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proclaiming that there is no car in all Barbados to compare with this one or that.

In Bridgetown itself you will not stay long, if you wish to see the rest of the island or to wander about a sugar estate or to bathe in water that is like rippling, warm, green silk. The boats do not stay here, as a rule, for more than a few hours; and, if you have never before tasted Creole cooking, your first breakfast should not be hurried. Soon, too soon, however early you begin, it will be time to drive back to the quay and to the yelling mob of negro boat-boys, who compete for your custom. When you reach your ship, you will find the promenade-deck spread with native wares; and from the boat-deck the last belated diver is arranging to collect his last haul.

From Barbados to Trinidad is little more than half a day's run. You approach Port of Spain from the north-east and reach your anchorage through one of the *bocas* that intersect what was once an unbroken stretch of land from the neighbouring promontory of Venezuela. You anchor far out and reach the shore by tender or launch, for the harbour is piled high with a ceaseless flow of Orinoco mud. It was not my first visit to Trinidad nor yet my second; but the beauty of the approach is always new. After the arid flatness of Barbados, the grandeur of the mountains here, trailing their vivid tropical vegetation to the water's edge, is overwhelming. As often as not there is a turbulent swell in the roadstead; usually there is a heat-haze. This time, however, we might have been gliding over a sheet of glass. I am always reminded of Corfu and of

From Barbados to Kingston

the landlocked sea by which you come thither from the north Dalmatian coast; but Corfu is cold and barren by comparison with this. At half-past five, the air was warm and soft as on a summer afternoon in England; the rising sun sent up a momentary glow from behind the mountains; the silence of the night snapped like a taut string; suddenly, full day was upon us.

If there be another life, may mine be spent here! The heat, the fragrance, the colours; the glory of the vegetation; the splendid dignity of lonely palms; the graciousness and charm of the people! If there has already been another life, mine was spent here: in coming back to Port of Spain, I felt that I had come home. The Lighthouse Jetty, Marine Square, the Union Club, Frederick Street, the Savannah—with Government House in the distance—, the mountains behind. I will not believe that I have never spent more than a week at a time here.

Yesterday I stayed less than a day, for we sail by schedule to collect our cargo of fruit in Central America. It was long enough to meet a few friends and to touch with life a hundred memories; long enough to make me feel that I must acquire a vested interest in the island. I suppose the shares in the great pitch-lake are quoted in London; there must be oil-wells that have ceased to flow, and I might perhaps buy one cheap; though I detest sugar and cocoa, I am ready to acquire a small financial interest in either for an excuse to come out here every winter. How impressive it would sound to announce that one was going to the West Indies to look after one's estates there!

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Perhaps — better still! — I can persuade some friend to take me into partnership. I would work wholly without payment as my services would be wholly without value; but I should have my excuse, and perhaps my expenses could be paid for me. Then, *then* . . .

In this enchanted country, where the oysters grow on trees and it is always afternoon, I could support life on turtle and crab-backs, on yams and sweet potatoes, on papaws and star-apples. I could bathe in a hot sea, where the palms come down into the water. I could watch the divine beauty of a tropical day turning to the more divine beauty of a tropical night, with no more interval of twilight than is needed to shew a king-palm, grey at one moment in the blaze of sunset, turning black a moment later against the greens and opals of the afterglow.

And, so long as they put up with me, I should be living among the most gracious and hospitable people in the world. If I could be sure that there was another life and that I should spend it here, death would lose all his sting. Until the question is decided one way or the other, I must acquire a vested interest in the island.

We sailed from Port of Spain in the afternoon; and by nightfall the coast line of Venezuela had faded from sight. Now, though we have the uninterrupted blue of the Caribbean Sea all round us, our course lies but a few miles north of the islands off the Spanish Main and the seaboard of Venezuela and Colombia. There is one island that I should like, above all others, to visit or, rather, to visit again. I landed there first when I

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was six years old; and no one would believe me if I said how often I have been there since. The last time, if you understand me, was when I was in London: a few hours before sailing, when I had not a moment to spare; I shall go again as soon as I am back in London, for—happily!—you need no passports nor tickets to reach

THE BEST-KNOWN ISLAND IN THE WORLD

Every one knows about Tobago. Its constitution, climate, history and principal exports are to be found in the appropriate works of reference, by anybody with the perverse curiosity to look for them. Robinson Crusoe was cast up there. The island lies off Trinidad; and its position is accurately marked on every marine chart. About Tobago, I should imagine, no one wants to hear more than that. Its latitude and longitude are given with an indecent absence of reserve.

Not so the best-known island in the world. It lies off the Spanish Main; but, for a sufficient reason, those who are most deeply interested in its future do not care to make it accessible to every Tom, Dick and Harry with a motor-boat at his command. The island is notoriously unhealthy; the inhabitants are presumably hostile; and any one who goes there takes his life in his hand. My friend Mr. Hawkins, who was a member of the last expedition, has protested times without number that he has done with it. Oxen and wain-ropes, he assures me, would not bring him back to "that accursed island" which he first visited with a survivor of Fontenoy as ship's doctor; he can still hear the screaming of the

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gulls as they rise from the marshy foreshore and wheel above the anchorage; "the worst dreams that ever I have," he says, "are when I hear the surf booming about its coasts, or start upright in bed, with the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in my ears: 'Pieces of eight! pieces of eight!'"

He can never forget the swelling roar of the old chanty: "*Fifteen men on a dead man's chest . . .*" I can never forget it, either. It was in the last year of Stevenson's life that I first made the voyage. My sixth birthday brought me a grey-green book called *Treasure Island*. I had never before read the whole of a book to myself; but, if your birthday fall in February and you live in London, it is long odds that you are sent to spend it in bed with a cold.

"*Squire Trelawney, Dr. Livesey, and the rest of these gentlemen, having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island . . .*" I began to read, slowly and painfully, rather wishing that some one would explain things. A man, living or dead, must be a very giant if fifteen men could sit or stand on his chest. . . . I wondered what a chine was: but for the signboard of the Admiral Benbow, the cutlass of Mr. Billy Bones (in reading it to myself, I always pronounced it "cut-lash") would have split Black Dog to "the chine". . . . "*Drink and the devil had done for the rest . . .*" "Devil" was a word which I was not allowed to use: an unattainable word, which to read gave me a fearful joy. Perhaps, when I was Mr. Stevenson's age, I should be allowed to use it. Grown-ups had the best of everything, though they never realized

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it and seldom enjoyed their opportunities. When I was grown-up, I should know what the oath was that made Jim Hawkins jump when he heard it from Black Dog. . . .

The effort of sustained concentration was exhausting, but the book seemed worth it. I liked the way that Billy Bones snorted his company into silence; but I liked, too, the way that Dr. Livesey stood up to him. For courage, though, give me the cold, blind, diabolical Pew, bearding the wounded lion in his den. We were steeped in piracy indisputable when the black spot was tipped for the first time. The long words did not matter now: I did not know the meaning of "revenue officers", but I did not care. It was very necessary, once the pirates had been foiled and the chart was in good hands, that we should get down to Bristol before any one came in with beef-tea or futile conversation. Bristol with its bracing reek of tar and salt, its ear-ringed, pig-tailed, mahogany-coloured sailors, its long forests of masts and spars! How I hated the modern city when I first set eyes on it, twenty years later!

I rather wanted some one to explain why Billy Bones should have been so terrified of "a sea-faring man with one leg." When Hawkins and I took that note round to Long John Silver's eating-house, we fell in love with the man; we refused to believe ill of him until that night when we fell asleep in the apple-barrel. I am afraid, though I know the man's duplicity and wickedness, that I love him still, better than any other of Stevenson's family, not excluding Jim Pinkerton or Michael Finsbury or Prince Florizel. . . .

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Every one remembers the moment when the *Hispaniola* sighted land. It was, for me, the moment when I was told that I had read enough for that day. Five priceless minutes were wasted while I was tucked up and kissed good-night; another five before the footsteps died away and I could safely turn on the light again. . . . Then the landing, the murder of the loyalist by Long John, the outbreak of the mutiny, Ben Gunn, the fight in the blockhouse . . . Ben Gunn rather frightened me; but this passing scare was nothing to the moment of dread when Jim and I came back to the block-house after stealing the schooner. Captain Flint's scream of "Pieces of Eight" . . . I knew that Jim would come through all right, even when he was threatened with torture, because it was an "I" story, and, when the hero is "I", you know—even at six—that all will be well in the end; but for a long time Jim and I were doubtful whether Barbecue would be able to hold his own single-handed against all the other buccaneers. (Why 'Barbecue'? I should have liked that to be explained, but I wanted to get on. . . .)

At six years old we entertain ambitions of which we should be heartily ashamed at six-and-twenty. When Jim and I found ourselves in the pirate camp, I am afraid we rather enjoyed it; but I at least felt that we were arrived a day after the fair. It was an experience that any boy might envy, to have passed so many days face to face with so many of Flint's men: Billy Bones and Pew, Black Dog, Morgan and Israel Hands; with Long John himself, for, while the others had all been afraid of Flint, Flint himself was afraid of Long John.

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Yes, it was well enough; but I wanted to meet the murderous Flint himself. I wanted to see him — one against six — coldly and methodically slaughtering the men who had helped him to bury his treasure. Long John himself was but Flint's shadow: I wanted to meet the man who could cast such shadows. Was it possible that Mr. Stevenson would write another book: *Flint's Last Voyage*? I wondered. . . .

I was awake and wondering still when they came to see if I was asleep. They were afraid I must have had rather a dull birthday. . . .

The grey-green book, battered and stained, is in the case reserved for duplicates. Twelve years after I was given it, the Pentland edition came out; and I determined to buy myself a birthday present. What matter that I could not afford it? Robert Louis Stevenson, in a "complete" edition, was worth a financial crisis; and I should have an excuse for reading *Treasure Island* again. Later, the Swanston edition was published; and I sold the Pentland to buy it. It was even more "complete"; and, as I cut the pages, I took the opportunity of reading *Treasure Island* again. Later still, there was a Vailima edition; Mr. Bouchier put on a dramatic version in London; one's nephews and nieces chattered endlessly of Jim and Long John; in self-defence one had to read the book again. . . .

And, as I write, this island — the best-known in the world — is lying a few miles to the south of us. It is somewhere off the Spanish Main; but Jim Hawkins refuses to give its latitude and longitude so long as the treasure remains unlifted. I do not want it for myself,

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but I should like to land for an hour or two simply to find out what has been happening since last I was there. The buccaneers whom we marooned have probably drunk themselves to death long since. Some other party of treasure-hunters may have slipped in and carried off the bars and ingots that we left behind. Anything may have happened.

For myself, knowing Barbecue as I do, I can make a guess how he has been employing his leisure in that Spanish-American port. Before he deserted from the *Hispaniola*, he had taken the precaution of cutting through the partition of the treasure-store and helping himself. With all his faults, he was a saving man; and, when his last venture in piracy had been forgotten, I feel sure that he fitted out an expedition from La Guayra or Barranquilla or Port Limon. Next to the story of Captain Flint's last voyage I should like to hear that of Captain Silver's first: under his own flag, I mean, with just such a man as Smollett to navigate for him. I want to know whether he had any trouble with his crew when they learned that he was after treasure; I want to know what kind of reception he was given by his former companions on the island.

I would write the book myself, if I could. Who would not? But who can?

AT SEA. 29 JANUARY, 1923.

Yesterday morning we had a death at sea. In the afternoon a spent bird settled on the ship. Though we have more than one naturalist on board, none could say

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what this long-billed, dark-plumed creature with the webbed feet might be. It was not a gull, not a petrel. Some one suggested a tern. . . .

Some one else was heard to murmur:

"Of course, there may be nothing in it. I only say it's curious. The two things on the one day. Almost as though the spirit were still hovering near the body. I am very psychic." . . .

I walked out of earshot. Sooner or later, one was bound to hear that. . . . I wonder if it is possible to go from one side of a narrow street to the other without encountering

A VERY PSYCHIC WOMAN

The sixth sense is the only one of which the fortunate possessor may boast without fear of vain-glorying. Sharp eyes, quick ears and a sensitive nose or tongue are no more the result of a man's cleverness than is the shape of his head or the length of his arm. The woman who boasted in season and out of season that she was long-sighted would soon be dismissed as a bore; the woman who calls herself second-sighted is no less a bore but she cannot be so easily dismissed. It is a rule of polite society that you may talk about your abnormal psychic gifts so long as any one will listen to you, or longer; it is a second rule, more astounding than the first, that your audience must accept your incredible statements with apparent seriousness. You are a bit of a witch; evidently you live on privileged terms with supernatural powers. Above all, you take yourself so seriously.

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"I don't pretend to explain it . . ."

That exordium should be a warning. Though we must listen with apparent seriousness if we listen at all, there is no reason why we should listen. If we *must*

"Sit silent and count the clock,
Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sublime, —
Let us fitly employ it under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death." . . .

We have heard it all before, so wearisomely often!

"I don't pretend to explain it. I can only tell you what happened. The moment I got inside that house . . . I'm very psychic about houses: if there's ever been any great unhappiness . . . Mark you, when I went there, I had no idea. It was only when I came down next day that they told me the whole story." . . .

Gracious lady, in this sad world can you point me a house that has weathered the daily storms of life for five years without encasing at least one scene of such unhappiness as would break the hearts of even us material creatures if we knew it? Do your delicate senses always react to an atmosphere of ambition thwarted and hope deferred? What 'nights of memories and sighs I consecrate to thee'! Do you ever sleep? To be sure, you must sleep in order to dream. . . .

"If you like, you may call it pure coincidence." . . .

That exordium too should be a warning!

"If you like, you may call it pure coincidence. I should say that myself if it hadn't happened so often. It's only with certain people, of course . . . I suppose there must be some sympathetic bond. . . . Well, it

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was during the war—1916—; a man whom I'll call . . . Brown. I wasn't in love with him, I hadn't seen him for years, I didn't know where he was. One night I dreamt that he was in great danger. Now, I hadn't been thinking of him, we hadn't been talking about the war. It was the week before the great attack. . . . No, I'm thankful to say he came through without a scratch." . . .

Gracious lady, if your friend survived four years of war, he was probably in great danger for much of the time. You were safe in dreaming that; and, as he survived, you would have been safe in dreaming that the danger was only apparent. Of the dreams which you dream for hours every night you remember but a thousandth part and that for only an infinitesimal fraction of time. You forget the ninety-nine occasions on which you dreamed that your father was dying; but, when he died within a month of the hundredth dream, you took it for a sign. Worse than that, you made of it an excuse to tell your friends that you were very psychic. . . .

"Now, in what I'm going to tell you, I want you to notice the time very carefully. One morning in the war I received an invitation to dine out two or three nights later. I was going to accept, I'd actually picked up the telephone when my husband came in and said I oughtn't to think of going out until I'd quite shaken off my cold. I declined the invitation. Afterwards, though I knew nothing about it at the time, I found that this was the very moment our boy was wounded. Curious, wasn't it? But not so curious as what happened

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next. He was brought to England and put into hospital at the very moment when I should have been going out to dinner if I had accepted that invitation. As it was, my husband and I dined by ourselves. We didn't go round to the hospital that night; in fact, we didn't hear till next day that our boy was there. But was n't it curious? The two things. I refuse to call that coincidence." . . .

Gracious lady, you may call it what you will. If you can, you may explain what your story proves. It will be better for you, however, and ultimately better for all of us who are wearied with your psychic experiences, if you will dispassionately examine your fitness to give evidence on any subject. Can you state on oath the hour at which you received any letter two months ago? Can you reproduce accurately the shortest conversation ten minutes after you have heard it? Can you distinguish, at a year's remove, between what you have yourself experienced and what you have been told? If you think that, unlike other women, you can observe precisely, remember faithfully and report exactly, go into court and give your sworn testimony on a simple street-accident. Until you establish the quality of your first five senses, you have no right to inflict a sixth upon us. Your mind is incurably sloppy; and you do not mend it by calling yourself psychic. You believe without evidence and excuse yourself by pleading that some things cannot be proved. Would you, on that plea, release from Broadmoor the criminal lunatic who believes that the moon is made of green cheese and that, before it melts, he must cut five throats a day? You are taking

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advantage of your sex: your male counterpart may be called a religious or a madman, he is never called "psychic" nor allowed to monopolize the conversation with his delusions.

"I don't pretend to explain it." . . .

Gracious lady, in a moment you will say "*There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, . . .*" May I explain it for you? These wearisome confessions are inspired by your lust for talking about yourself; but what you say, until you have learned the rules of evidence, is not worth hearing. Though you have chosen to forget your exploits in 1914, I remember them. You heard that Russian troops were passing through England; your friends had their cars commandeered to carry them from the boat to the train; with your own eyes you saw them in their carriages; a friend of a friend talked to them in Russian; you yourself carried fruit and cool drinks to their windows. You saw the Russians; you would have stated all this on oath, but an official contradiction was published by the War Office. Then, with equal assurance, you denied that you had seen or fed or believed in any Russians; you ridiculed those who had; but this did not keep you from believing in the angels at Mons.

*"For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, 'The world has been harsh and strange;
Something is wrong: there needeth a change.'"* . . .

There is no reason why you should not call yourself psychic; there is no reason why you should not believe (some things cannot be proved) that two and two make

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five and a quarter; but you must not talk about it quite so much. It is egotistic and it is tiresome: other people are just as anxious to talk about themselves. If you lay claim to abnormal powers, use them for the common good: turn your psychic talents to palmistry.

"This is a very interesting hand." . . .

That exordium is always encouraging.

"A very interesting hand . . . Two bad illnesses, but you've got over them; and the line of life is very good after that. Your head rules your heart: I should think you could be very determined if you liked. . . . Had you a violent temper when you were young? I have the feeling that if you didn't always keep a very strong curb on yourself . . . It's funny that, with so much strength, you should be so sensitive. I should think you let things hurt you too appallingly, though of course you're much too reserved ever to shew it." . . .

No one could object to that. It you will be psychic in the right way, the world will be psychic with you; but no one is interested in your premonitions and dreams and coincidences.

AT SEA. 30 JANUARY, 1923.

Years have passed since I last read a Sherlock Holmes story, though I can still pity the boys who have to grow up without the novelty of him. In the 'nineties, the Strand Magazine was an event. In one story, if I remember rightly, Holmes revealed a specialist's knowledge of English mud. One speck on Watson's obliging trouser-leg was enough to indicate that part of the coun-

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try in which he had last been neglecting his practice. (How he ever kept a patient I could never make out!) I believe, at the risk of a boast, that I could tell the latitude of any ship from the number and kind of the sauce-bottles on any table in the saloon.

For the first days out, while the air is cold and the fish is young, you require no more than your shore allowance of mustard and vinegar. Later, there will be a run on the chutnee and mustard pickle "to drown the meat", as you will hear. In the tropics you find jaded men supporting life almost exclusively on Worcester sauce. I once went to sea with

LEA AND PERRIN

What names their godfathers and godmothers had bestowed upon them I have no idea. The Man-Who-Knew-Everything-About-Everybody promised to find out; but on the first night at dinner, when Lea emptied half a bottle of Worcester sauce into his soup and Perrin, after watching him in jealous and terrified agony, consumed the other half, the Nickname-Fiend christened them, and, after that, no one troubled to call them anything else. As Perrin was perceptibly fatter even than Lea, you could distinguish them by remembering that Lea was the (relatively) lean one; but both were gross of body, both were gross feeders and both smothered their gross meals with every kind of hot condiment.

The Man-Who-Knew-Everything-About-Everybody told me that they were wealthy bachelors and old fellow-travellers; he believed them to be retired average-adjusters, and I believed this too, because I had always

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wished to meet an average-adjuster, even in the sere of his retirement. They were travelling, I heard, for their health; but this I refused to believe, as I have seldom seen two men with more indestructible constitutions. They drank, ate and smoked to excess; they took no exercise; they had lived this life for twenty years; and, apart from occasional congestion of the liver, they had never known a day's illness.

Perhaps it was an incipient liver-attack; perhaps the glowing pickles and sauces induced a choleric temperament. Certainly I have never heard more persistent snarling and yapping than these two carried on at every meal during the first days out.

"Digging your grave with your teeth," Perrin would grumble when he came in to luncheon late enough to find that Lea had finished the chutnee.

"You can't expect to have much appetite after last night," Lea would retort spitefully.

And then they would quarrel over the food and tell each other nauseating stories of men who had died simply from eating and drinking too much and taking no exercise.

With the other passengers they were uniformly popular; and, when you were grown used to this eternal bickering, you minded it no more than the snapping and gambolling of overgrown puppies. You were only a little sorry, perhaps, that men who were blessed with wealth, means and independence should get so much exasperation out of life and so little enjoyment.

"Why they travel together . . . ," muttered the Man-

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Who-Knew-Everything-About-Everybody, at fault for the first time that voyage.

Perrin gave me the explanation as we sat in a corner of the smoking-room that night, watching Lea dicing for cocktails.

"He'll kill himself at this rate," he predicted with morose satisfaction. "That's the fourth round. . . . By the way, shall we have 'the other half'? . . . It must be twenty years since I met him first; and in all that time he's been overeating, overdrinking. It makes me sick to watch him."

"I wonder you travel together," I ventured.

"I can't help myself. Twenty years ago I shared a cabin with him coming home from the Cape. I foolishly let out that I had to go abroad for my health every winter; and, when I went on board the following autumn—I was going out to Ceylon—I found him waiting for me at the top of the gangway. I can't shake him off! Before we've been home a week, he'll be saying 'What d' you think about Honolulu for next year?' You don't want to snub a man you're seeing every day; and, if you tried, he's too thick-skinned to notice it."

"Do you live together in England?", I asked.

"God! No!", said Perrin vehemently. "We have chambers in the same house. I can tell you, that's quite near enough!"

The next day Lea approached me apologetically, with the hope that I had not been unduly bored by poor Perrin's conversation overnight:

"It means so much to him if a stranger will endure him for a bit. I've known him for twenty years, I

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should think; and, though I know better than most men what a bore he can be, I do recognize that he's a very lonely man. After our first voyage together, I suggested rather rashly that he should come with me the next winter. It was *pathetic* to see how he jumped at it! After that . . . well, it's become almost impossible for me to drop him. He knows I have to go abroad every year for my health. If I didn't ask him to come with me, he'd be frightfully hurt. A complete breach. . . . And you can't quarrel with a man when you're dining together every night at the same club. Besides, I feel every time that it may be the last. I believe in the motto 'Live and let live', but he's killing himself. Stuffing and soaking. It's no use mincing matters. . . . You'll have one more before you go to bed? Sure? Well, I think I must. What's the steward done with those sandwiches?"

We had been a fortnight in the tropics when Lea came down to breakfast alone.

"He calls it the heat," I was told when I asked what had happened to Perrin. "Indirectly, I suppose that's true. Heat produces thirst. I don't know whether you saw him last night? Truth to tell, I'm not altogether sorry: in the long run this may steady him; he wanted a reminder that you can't play fast and loose with your constitution." . . .

Perrin was aggressively steady when I met him later in the day. He was drinking soda-water and nibbling dry biscuits.

"Like a fool, I went to sleep in the sun," he explained. "I shall be as right as rain to-morrow."

And that night he sat virtuously apart, drinking more

From Barbados to Kingston

soda-water and prophesying that Lea would have one of his attacks if he went on at this rate. Gloriously certain of his articulation, he crossed the room to administer a stern rebuke, which Lea took in exceedingly bad part.

"If you would mind your own business . . .," I heard.

"It *will* be my business if I have you on my hands with a congested liver," Perrin answered.

"I've no intention of having a congested liver. *Some* people, you may be surprised to learn, *do* study the rudiments of hygiene. If you were to take some exercise occasionally, instead of stuffing and soaking all day, you wouldn't be in your present state."

A comparison of present states had opened promisingly by the time I went to bed; and for a day or two I avoided the smoking-room for fear of being dragged into the quarrel. Then Perrin came to my cabin and asked if I would sit with Lea while he himself tried to get some sleep.

"I've been up with him the last two nights," he explained rather hoarsely. "He's very bad indeed. Liver, of course; and it's reacted on his heart. I think he's taken a turn for the better, or I would n't leave him; but he's not out of danger yet. . . . I'm in the next cabin: if you're not perfectly satisfied that he's all right, you must knock me up at once."

I do not know whether Perrin mistrusted my competence or whether he was unable to sleep: at intervals of half-an-hour he came in to shake up Lea's pillows and to adjust the electric fan. For a big man he moved with

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surprisingly little noise; for an irascible man he exhibited remarkable self-control; and, if he mistrusted my competence, he was amply justified in the moment when Lea changed colour with alarming suddenness and I completely lost my head. To say that he was dragged out of the jaws of death is an understatement: Lea's heart had stopped, he had ceased to breathe, and Perrin brought him back to life.

"That was touch-and-go," he whispered, as our patient was surrendered to the doctor. "I wonder what I should have done if . . . if anything had happened. Every time I travel with him, I feel it's going to be the last; and when you've been night and day with a man for twenty years . . ."

Thanks to an indestructible constitution, Lea recovered; and on the first day that we met cold weather I saw him in the centre of a rum-punch ring, trying — as he told me — to find anything that would keep the cold out. (A month earlier, he had recommended rum-punch as "the one thing that will keep you cool in this weather.") We had no more than a moment together, as Lea — it appeared — was anything but well, and it was Perrin's reluctant duty to sit with him. Both, however, were their old selves by the time we entered the Channel.

"I should have a couple of chops to follow," muttered Lea in disgust as he listened to Perrin giving his order for breakfast on the last day.

"I don't need them. And you don't either. No one needs butcher's meat at breakfast. I always think you'd be much better if you cut it right out. . . . Steward, what's happened to the Worcester sauce this morning?"

From Barbados to Kingston

I thought I heard a spiteful voice muttering that, after last night, its owner was not surprised to find an exceptional demand for Worcester sauce.

"If you take some soda-water with it and a few drops of tabasco vinegar . . ." the voice continued.

"You seem to know all about it."

The time-honoured bicker was interrupted by the return of the steward.

"Sorry to say, gentlemen," he announced, "there's no more Worcester sauce on the ship."

But for that I believe Lea and Perrin might have parted company for ever. They were in the irritable stage of convalescence; and their quarrelling had passed beyond the snapping and gambolling of overgrown puppies. As it was, they said simultaneously:

"Then it's the last time I travel by *this* line."

As they left the ship together, I heard Perrin asking:

"Did you have any talk with that man who'd been wintering in Bermuda? I was thinking, for next year . . ."

"How does one get there?", asked Lea. "I loathe the idea of going by New York." . . .

PORT LIMON. 1 FEBRUARY, 1923.

Yesterday afternoon we sighted land after four days' coasting along the Spanish Main. The blue of the Caribbean Sea changed to green; the big rollers gave place to a turbulent swell; and the sun faded into a leaden sky. Through the haze appeared a distant line of mountains, rising in tier upon tier with dividing valleys of white cloud.

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A patch of vivid green crested with snow turned to a cluster of rocks covered with rank vegetation. Though the snow defined itself as a hanging cloud of spray, the heavy rains that drench this coast must wash the salt out of the palms and crotons. A wireless aerial topped the trees; and, as we drew near, we saw that our green island was the quarantine station. Behind it, the piers and sheds of the docks hid the low coast-line; but, as we nosed cautiously to our berth, a flat shore came in sight, fringed with palm-trees. Along the pier runs a light railway to bring our bananas alongside and load them by elevators working on an endless band.

There is hardly any rise or fall in the tide; but a ceaseless swell keeps the boat rolling and creaking against the pier. All night long the heads of the great wooden piles have been groaning till you might have thought a hungry lion was roaring outside your cabin-port. From time to time, and without warning, tropical rain falls for half-an-hour, and, without warning, stops. Night and day, the air is heavy with damp heat; and, at least on this part of the coast, the sun is a promise unfulfilled.

At the end of the pier lie the public gardens; and, in the evening, the youth and beauty of Port Limon come out to hear the band. The youth is very young, the beauty very beautiful: Spanish colouring blended with Indian grace. A broad promenade runs round the white band-stand; its outer edge is flanked with king-palms; and big arc-lamps shine down on the slowly moving couples. The girls are bare-armed and bare-headed, with bright sashes and ribbons; their dresses are of all

From Barbados to Kingston

colours, their shoes and stockings white; they live, I should imagine, for this hour.

Between the coast and the mountains there lies a belt of jungle. Beyond it is San José, the capital of Costa Rica. If you have a taste for seven hours in a Central American train, you may go up for the night. If, however, you are familiar with this kind of forest-and mountain-scenery, if you distrust the cleanliness of your hotel, if you suspect that you will stare for seven hours at an impenetrable mist, above all if you have experienced the fearful joys of Central American travelling, you will be well advised to remain at the port.

Lord Morley, in an essay on reading, counselled those who were bitten with a desire for self-improvement, to set down briefly what they knew of a subject and to compare this with what they knew after studying a book on the subject. What did I know of Costa Rica yesterday at this hour? It is a Central American republic between Panama and Nicaragua; I have drunk its coffee and eaten its bananas; Lord Rosebery, if I recollect rightly, stated in a speech on the proposed reform of the House of Lords that it was the only country in the world with single-chamber government (and, as I neither know nor care, I would not dream of contradicting him). That is all I knew of Costa Rica. One may be ashamed of one's ignorance, but one should be honest about it. To-day . . .

To-day I know that I hope to be dead, damned and forgotten before I visit Costa Rica again. I hate its unceasing rain, its leaden sky, its noise and smell. One may be ashamed of one's intolerance, but one should be

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honest about it. I hate it, but I am not going to be narrow-minded about it; and, before I am dead, damned and forgotten, I hope to eat more of its bananas and to drink more of its coffee. They must, however, be brought to me; I will not go in search of them.

AT PORT LIMON. 2 FEBRUARY, 1923.

Still here! And yet these two days have not been without interest. I have passed them in the company of

AMINTA

When she came off in the tender at Port of Spain, my first impression was one of brownness. Though her hair was black, her face and hands were brown as a berry; her eyes—the softest and most wistful that I have ever seen—had that gleam of gold which you find in an overhung stream when the sun breaks through the foliage. I did not hear her name, but I thought of her as ‘Brownie’; I was not introduced until some days later, but for my own satisfaction I christened her Aminta. Until I heard what her relations were with the man who brought her on board, I felt that there was nothing actionable in my thinking of him as Lord Ormont.

They were perplexing, those relations of Brownie to her lord. He, I should imagine, was a man of seven-and-forty; scarred and weather-beaten; an insatiable traveller with a taste for the more go-as-you-please countries of the world; a man who had prospected for diamonds in the Guianas and for platinum in Colombia. He had contrived to break, burn or tear every inch of his body.

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"And, I'm afraid, of my wife's," he told me. "I've had to send her back to Europe to be patched."

Lord Ormont had a wife, then, in Europe.

If he was seven-and-forty, I could make no guess at Aminta's age. She was ridiculously small, but not—Ormont told me—small for her years. At one moment she exhibited the wisdom, the self-possession and the world-weary disillusion of outworn maturity; at another, she was an irresponsible, gay, mischievous child. I have never met any one less self-conscious. Her devotion to Ormont was only matched by the frankness with which she displayed it. She was literally hanging round his neck when they came aboard; I saw them taking sips from the same tumbler of lime-squash; and, at the end, she put up her little wet lips to be wiped with Ormont's big green handkerchief. Then she curled herself in his arms, like a tired child, and went to sleep, while the other men in the smoking-room looked on rather enviously.

Ormont repaid her devotion with interest. If Aminta had been his own favourite daughter, they could not have been more completely inseparable. And I soon heard the reason. On one of his wild expeditions into the hinterland of British Guiana, Ormont had been mixed up in a shooting-affray. He did not tell me the rights and the wrongs of it, but he was tragically frank about the result. Aminta's mother had been killed; the child was but two months old at the time; and Ormont had adopted her.

"Does she know . . . ?", I began. I had almost said: "Does she know that she is lavishing all her beautiful

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young trust and affection on the man who killed her mother?"

Ormont caressed the sleeping child's left hand. I saw with horror that the end of one finger was missing. Some day poor little Brownie would enquire the reason; she would have to be told that the bullet which killed her mother had first struck her. Perhaps Ormont had already told her; that, perhaps, explained the ineffable wistfulness in the child's brown eyes. I realized that in her moments of greatest irresponsibility and mischief Brownie never smiled. You would sometimes hear her little laugh when Ormont teased her or the first officer made unblushing love to her; but, if a child may suffer from constitutional melancholy, she suffered so, even when she seemed most light-hearted.

It need hardly be said that every man on board conspired to spoil her; but from the beginning the first officer was her favourite. He would talk to her, play with her, tease her, kiss her by the hour; and she would return his kisses. Ormont did not mind; the first officer was old enough to be her father; and it was no one else's business. You could not cheapen Aminta nor turn her head. Some men object to the presence of women in the smoking-room on board a ship; in Aminta's favour they made one exception. If things were said that she ought not to have heard, I know she did not understand them.

I have said that I could make no guess at her age; but, to judge by her appearance, I did think she was too young to be given cocktails. To be sure, the amount that Ormont allowed her would not have hurt any one;

From Barbados to Kingston

but other people were always pressing drinks upon her, and it was impossible to refuse them always. One day, when she had been told she must have no more, I saw a little brown hand stealing out as though it did not know what it was doing; and, a moment later, Brownie was helping herself from some one else's glass. I felt it was not the first time she had played that trick; I wondered if Ormont had noticed.

Next day I knew that he had. For the first time since I had known her, I found Aminta in a thoroughly bad temper. I said something about the heat, but Ormont told me brutally that she had drunk too much the day before and was suffering from a headache. Whether she was ashamed of herself or merely disgusted with life, she would speak to no one; if anybody addressed her, she turned away with a whimper; the little hands went more and more often to the throbbing temples; and at length, breaking down completely, she threw herself into Ormont's arms and buried her face on his chest.

I think she must have fallen asleep; but the rattle of a dice-box roused her. When the cocktails were brought, I fancied that her eyes brightened. Nobody asked her to have one; and the light faded. Then, when no one else was looking, I saw the little hand stealing out again. . . .

It was not thoughtlessness, it was not mischief; it was vice. If Aminta behaved like this at her present age, whatever it was, I trembled to think what she would be like in five years' time. Why did Ormont, who was so devoted to her, allow it? If he had brought her up since she was two months old, he must bear the responsi-

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bility for a weakness which he had originated or encouraged.

I was tempted to give him a warning, but I did not want to be told this was no business of mine. Conceivably, Aminta came of tainted stock: instead of originating or encouraging a frailty, Ormont might be trying to cure it by gentle stages. It was significant that her father was never mentioned; significant, too, that her mother had met a violent end. Had the shooting-affray developed from a drunken brawl?

That night, as we lay in port, a number of garish young women with the voices of indefatigable starlings boarded the ship and made themselves free of the public rooms. Ormont frowned as their shrill chatter advanced upon us from the direction of the saloon; and, when they burst into the smoking-room, I took the opportunity of saying that I did not think women should be allowed here. Aminta had gone to bed; and my comment sounded innocent enough.

"It's all right for you," answered Ormont. "But, if a man mustn't smoke in the saloon and a woman mustn't come here, it's impossible for them to meet under cover. If you're travelling with a child . . ."

"I should have thought the case against admitting children was even stronger," I said. "It can't do a very young girl any good to get caught up in a cocktail-ring."

"Oh, I agree," answered Ormont; and I was glad when we escaped to a less dangerous subject.

About women's ages I am almost wholly without curiosity; and, if I enquired Aminta's, it was from pique. The better I knew her, the less able I was to guess.

From Barbados to Kingston

Sometimes she looked older than the oldest woman, sometimes younger than the youngest child; measureless wisdom alternated with ignorance greater than a savage's. The wistfulness in those golden-brown eyes went deeper than the memory of a shooting-affray; it betrayed a hopeless yearning after the unattainable.

I mentioned this fancy to Ormont.

"Perhaps she feels that she ought to have been born a man," he suggested.

"Has she always had the same expression?", I asked.

"Ever since she was two months old."

"And how old is she now?"

Ormont calculated for a moment on his fingers.

"Nine months," he answered. "She's finished growing now. Monkeys develop very quickly."

I believe Lord Palmerston once said that the only things Parliament could not do were to turn a man into a woman or a woman into a man. I have turned a male monkey into a female; the rest of the story is true.

CRISTOBAL. 3 FEBRUARY, 1923.

We left Port Limon as soon as the passengers from San José came on board and we berthed here, the Atlantic end of the Panama Canal, this morning, within sight of that peak in Darien on which stout Cortez stood silent. Cristobal and Colon to-day are very much what they were two years ago when I came through the canal on my way home from Peru; I do not imagine that my description of Cristobal and Colon two years ago would

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be interesting to any one. These are but ports of brief call on my way to Jamaica and the Bahamas. I have already described them and would sooner tell of San José. Though I have never seen it, the other passengers have depicted it so exhaustively . . . I hope they enjoyed themselves; certainly I believed them when they told me they had. I wonder whether they believed me when I said how much we had enjoyed ourselves on board?

Why should they? It would be outrageous if we were happier when they were away than when they were with us. Now that their sixteen hours of train-journey were at an end, they could make light of their fatigues. They, too, had agreed upon their story of the railway that ran within six inches of a two-thousand-feet precipice; and we had nothing to match it. As Lord Melbourne might have observed, it did not matter a damn what we said, but we must all say the same thing. And we did not. Some talked of the pleasant cooling rains; others of a July sun in a cloudless sky. He who boasted of the incomparable bathing-pool which he had discovered was embarrassed to find that his neighbour had been trawling for sharks—and successfully—in the same waters.

No, I do not think that we were believed for a moment; but it did not matter. I do not believe that those others had such wine and food as they pretended; I doubt if there is such an hotel as they described in San José; I am by no means sure that they went there at all.

At the town of Y—— in the province of N—— (as most of Tchekov's short stories begin, for a reason that I

From Barbados to Kingston

have never fathomed), I invented, stocked and advertised a certain restaurant because some friend wearied me with his praises of another, in the province of P—— at the town of Z——. He must take me there, he said; he should, I resolved, do nothing of the kind. My palate had been rather spoilt for the second-best by the fare which I was accustomed to get in the restaurant of my imagination. What dishes the mistress of the house—a Frenchwoman—prepared for me with her own hands! What golden wines her sly ruffian of a husband kept for a privileged patron! And all for next to nothing! The demure, welcoming smile of Annette, madame's daughter, alone plunged you in debt that you could not hope to clear. . . .

I was miserable when I had to burn that restaurant to the ground; but my friend, after pestering me to give him the address, took me for a long drive and announced without warning:

“This is the town of Y—— in the province of N——. It is time for luncheon.”

“But not here,” I said, pointing to the scene of a recent fire.

We lunched that day in the province of P—— at the town of Z——.

AT SEA. 4 FEBRUARY, 1923.

We left Cristobal yesterday afternoon and are steaming north across the Caribbean Sea, in the teeth of a head wind. To-morrow we are due at Kingston, where the second stage of my journey ends.

PART THREE
FROM KINGSTON TO NASSAU

PART THREE

From Kingston to Nassau

KINGSTON, JAMAICA. 5 FEBRUARY, 1923.

"The Pearl of the Caribbean" appears on the horizon as a tiny cloud of dust. Rising and spreading, as the blue of deep water changes to the green of shallow, it still retains its dusty hue; and, when you are near enough to distinguish the peaks of the long, irregular crest, you still find a dusty brown the dominant colour. Jamaica has suffered long, and is still suffering, from drought. But for the low-hanging clouds that crown the heights, you might fancy that you were steaming into one of the many ports of rainless northern Chile: there is the same suggestion of volcano and earthquake about their majestic brown line as about the Cordilleras; but in the nitrate-ports of Chile rain seems to be almost unknown and the sky is so uniformly blue as to be monotonous. Here, though the clouds may not break so often as they threaten, there is infinite variety as their shadows drop and glide and rise. The dusty brown changes to purple and black and green: it is never the same for two moments in two places.

Under the mountains, when you are close in, you will

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see a broad plain stretching down to the water and, as it seems, level with it. Opposite you, so flat as to be almost invisible, is Kingston. To reach the city, you circle round the pilot station and enter smooth water at Port Royal, where a narrow peninsula, once the site of old Kingston, runs out to protect the present harbour.

The most uncompromising patriot would hardly ask you to admire the docks; and Kingston itself is less a city than a wasted opportunity. Sixteen years ago it was laid in ruins by an earthquake; its architects, granted their second chance, repeated the earlier crimes and blunders of their craft. You have dusty, uneven streets of low, unlovely houses; each one drearily like the rest; it is only when you stand on the seawall of the Myrtle Bank, watching the stars reflected in the water, with green grass under foot, palms all about you, the windows and gardens illuminated and a breeze rustling from the sea, that you feel the thwarted magic of the place. They might, these wretched builders!, have given us a Valley of Paradise; they were content to copy the miscreants who threw away a similar chance and gave us the present Valparaiso. Few cities are worthy of their earthquakes.

The railway-service of Leeds, I am told, makes it the best city in the world to leave. Though a similar tribute can hardly be paid to the surface of the Kingston streets, all roads are good that lead to the open; and no one lives on the level if he can escape to the surrounding hills. Once free of the glowing, airless streets and the parched fields beyond, you rise quickly and in a few minutes are surrounded by scenery that makes you won-

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der no more why its lovers call Jamaica "the Pearl of the Caribbean". There are towering mountains, deep gorges and tropical vegetation: that ring which you could see surrounding the plain as you drew in to Kingston; and, on the far side of the mountains, there is such scenery as makes you wonder how you were ever content to admire the Kingston side.

KINGSTON, JAMAICA. 6 FEBRUARY, 1923.

This time I had less than two days before changing ship for the Bahamas. On one, I drove to Castleton and visited the botanical gardens, where there is an admirable collection of tropical shrubs, flowers and trees. After the small, baked plots round the bungalows near the city, it was refreshing to find a shaded pool with nymphaeas of divers colours pressing up between the round tables of the Victoria Regia. The gardens lie almost at the bottom of the gorge that runs for twenty miles from Kingston to Castleton. The mountains on either side rise precipitously; and dense vegetation stretches from the top to the very edge of the stream, which here plunges from one set of rapids to another and twists from one to another of the valley's serpentine bends. High overhead, the Kingston road runs parallel to the stream; uphill, downhill, but mostly round hair-pin corners. At some of these you can look up and down the valley for many miles; for most of the way you are under the lee of the Blue Mountain range, from which the most famous coffee of the West Indies takes its name.

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*As you lunch on a vast boulder in mid-stream, to the
croon of running water as it swirls over the rapids above
and below you,*

*“ You ’re a dainty man to please,
If you ’re not satisfied with these,
If you ’re not satisfied. . . .
Take all these, you lucky man,
Take and keep them, if you can.” . . .*

*I could not keep them. My ship came in that day;
and, the next morning, I bade Kingston good-bye for
the present. By night we had steamed out of sight of
Jamaica. But I am coming back!*

AT SEA. 7 FEBRUARY, 1923.

*The line to which I have now transferred myself runs
from Belize, in British Honduras, to Kingston, Nassau
and Bermuda. In winter, the ships go on to Halifax
and, while the Saint Lawrence remains free from ice, to
Montreal; in summer, they are busy enough with the
traffic from one island to another.*

*You will observe that I came on board in the middle
of the run. That is always a mistake. Though I have
once more been allotted a double stateroom for my
single use, though the purser, the steward, every one has
said: “ Ask, and it shall be given unto you,” still it is a
mistake. You may leave a ship where you will; and,
if you leave before the end of the voyage and are care-
ful to say in good time that you wish you were going
farther, some one is sure to reply after a fitting interval
that you will be greatly missed. You may fancy, on*

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your first night ashore, that eyes are turning with regret to your empty chair and that voices are murmuring wistfully: "I wonder how he's getting on."

If you join a ship after the voyage has begun, the wistful voices will be murmuring for your predecessor; you will be an interloper who has elbowed a poor, decent ghost out of his chair; the eyes that turn to you are filled with regret for your being there, for your having come on board, for your ever daring to be born. You are not wanted; well, that may be no new experience. You are shown that you are not wanted; and custom cannot stale the mortification of that experience. No one but your steward loves you; and his, you may be sure, is an interested love.

Yes, it is always a mistake to board a ship in the middle of her run; but it is usually an unavoidable mistake. Your best, your only, hope is to study

THE ART OF ARRIVING LATE

When a late Camden Professor of Ancient History in the University of Oxford forsook the greatest college for one which he considered — who shall say if he thought rightly? — less great, he arrived to find his new colleagues preparing to celebrate a centenary of their foundation. Thanksgiving, he learned, was to be rendered in chapel at three o'clock punctually, the fellows marching thither "in a doleful train", two and two, like love-sick maidens or animals entering an ark.

"And," said the senior fellow, "will you please be ready at a quarter to three, in order to wait for the procession?"

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"If," replied the Camden Professor of Ancient History, "there be any waiting, it will be *for* me, not *by* me."

So Great Powers speak to Little Nations; and big colleges to small. It is the Palmerston touch: that which has made England what — despite Mr. H. G. Wells — she is. The formula is one part of confidence in oneself to one part of contempt for every one else; the result, colloquially, is "the stuff to give them". In that spirit England rejected the Pope and lopped King Charles' head and refused to turn her back on don or devil and made Flores rime with Azores and lost the American colonies and won the late war. In that spirit she will win another war, perhaps, and lose her Indian empire. It is the necessary spirit when, like Lord Palmerston, you are convinced that you are always right; it is a hundredfold the necessary spirit when, like a few of us, you know that you are wrong. And it is always wrong to be avoidably late.

If you live in the London postal district designated W. 1 (and are a snob), you can, on straying outside, put the blame on your hostess by explaining that your chauffeur is London-bred, that you had no idea it was so far, that you had to ask your way three times. Make yourself sufficiently feared and hated, cultivate the Palmerston touch; and you will be invited again. Remember for the second occasion, however, that you will be advised to change your chauffeur if you admit that he has again had to ask his way three times. It is safer, when you are thirty minutes late for an eight o'clock dinner, to say: "I drove round and round for fear of

From Kingston to Nassau

being too early. You *did* ask me for half-past eight, did n't you?"

If you yourself live in "Greater London" and arrive late in the postal district designated W. 1, you can plead — on the first occasion — that Hampstead was snow-bound, Chelsea flooded and Kensington gripped by the densest fog of the year. Your story will be accepted; London is too big for any one to know it properly; some old gentleman of the company will recall that his father killed a fox in Piccadilly and shot snipe on what is now Eaton Square (the descendants of these sportsmen are roughly equal in number to the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers); and you may find yourself invested with a halo of romance as a man who lives for choice in the wilds, who has seen blood flowing in five continents and is stifled by civilization and of the great cities. Your lack of conversation will be attributed to those years which you spent in the silent solitudes of Rhodesia. As you walk to your Tube, you may overhear yourself being described as "an awkward customer" or "a bad man to get across". These floods and blizzards, however, must not be turned on a second time; when next you are late for dinner, you had better wrap a handkerchief round one hand, explain that the bleeding has stopped and refuse to have a doctor summoned. Your story will be accepted; London is too big for any one to know properly all that goes on inside it; and some old gentleman of the company will divert an embarrassing attention from you by recalling that his father once staked a favourite horse out hunting . . . "Where do you think? In London. Yes, sir; in London. The meet

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was in Hampstead; and they killed in Piccadilly . . . Strange, is n't it? But I can tell you something stranger than that. You know what Eaton Square looks like nowadays? You would n't think that used to provide the finest snipe-shooting in England? When my father was a young man . . ."

If there be any waiting, it will be for me, not by me.

They are the words of an artist in life, who knew that every man hopes to reach a house at the moment when dinner is announced and to enter a theatre as the curtain goes up: to have his waiting done for him, in short, by some one else. Not less important than the words, however, is the tone, for your artist in life has to overcome the resentment which is felt against him who keeps others waiting. He may win by brutality or by charm: he may excite compassion by his bandaged hand or stir interest by the dare-devil manner in which he describes the journey from St. John's Wood. After that, he has another kind of difficulty to face: all these people who have been kept waiting, though by now their resentment has been charmed or bullied away, must have dedicated their leisure to the delights of conversation; the late arrival may find his openings stopped with the chill interruption: "Oh, we were talking about that before you came"; unless he show tact and determination, he may see himself squeezed into the cold, sitting between the unresponsive backs of two ladies who will not fling him a scrap of attention till they have exhausted their conversations with their two other neighbours. He is an interloper, like the man who boards a ship in the middle of her voyage when all the alliances have been sealed,

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the bridge-fours made up and the shady corners staked out; like the man who joins a house party after all the quarrels are in train. If not actively resented, he is at least not wanted. Where, in the art of being late, is he to find the secret of making himself desired?

Mankind — fortunately for him who wishes to be courted — sets no limit to its curiosity. Arrange with your servant that he is to telephone to you throughout dinner. You can leave the table impatiently and return grimly, muttering — if you will — :

- (a) "He can take it or leave it." . . .
- (b) "I allow no woman born of woman to black-mail *me*," or
- (c) "If any one here holds any Mexican Eagles, he may look for some interesting developments." . . .

You can, if you prefer it, send an irritable message:

- (a) "The Prime Minister seems to think it's my business to drynurse him." . . .
- (b) "You can tell her that the matter is now in the hands of the police" . . . or
- (c) "Sell! Tell him to sell like the very devil."

On board ship you can make a similar impression by saying loudly to the Marconi operators: "Any messages for me I want delivered at any hour of the day or night"; and to the purser, as you hand him a sealed package: "If you'll lock this in your safe, it may prevent further bloodshed. I give you my word of honour it's not any kind of explosive, but I mustn't say more than that." . . .

After this, you may be sure, the other passengers will

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not deny you their attention; your presence will not be resented; and, by the time they have discovered that you are not a head-hunter, a diamond-digger nor an absconding Central American president, they will — it is to be hoped — also have discovered that you are a charming companion. The art of arriving late will have justified itself.

It may be that your dream is to go on board a ship where you will be left undisturbed to rise and retire as you please, to read or rest, to do what you like — in short — and to be dispensed from the delights of conversation. To the first impertinent stranger who asks if you are travelling far, reply that you are travelling very far indeed, that you can never return to England, that — though your assumed name is innocent enough — you would be known instantly under your real name as the man who was lately turned out of all his clubs for cheating at cards, that this foul charge is unfounded, that you were suspected because of your abnormal good luck, that you never lose at cards and that you will demonstrate this if your new friend will collect half-a-dozen people to play poker with you.

AT SEA. 8 FEBRUARY, 1923.

From dawn until after noon we were coasting by the eastern end of Cuba. By to-morrow we shall have left the tropics and shall be among the most southerly of those three thousand rocks and islands that make up the Bahamas. At one end of the day there is a sunrise to watch, always different from all that you have seen be-

From Kingston to Nassau

fore; at the other, there is a sunset. There are stars to identify; there are meals to be eaten, sleep to be taken, tobacco to be smoked; and, in all this lovely blue expanse of north Caribbean Sea, there is nothing else to do when once you have planted your chair in a place where the autocrat of the boat-deck cannot reach you.

Providence, which gave weak man his chance of escape by ordaining that the shark must pause to turn on his side before biting, has given me my chance of escape by ordaining that the autocrat should measure as much from back to front as from head to foot. The generous companion-way abrades him; though he has a double cabin, I am convinced that he cannot enter it; and, among the derricks and windlasses of the after-deck, it is child's play for me to elude him.

In Kingston I was warned against him; and, though I did not know his name, I recognized his voice and manner. We have been ship-mates in a dozen incarnations; and, with each one, his interest in politics deepens. He it was who explained the Thirty Years' War to me and predicted that, unless Sparta bled Athens white, there would be another war in Greece before fifty years. He told me, later, that Hannibal had been preparing this second Punic war for at least forty years. Later still, he lamented that the Mediterranean peoples should quarrel among themselves instead of making common cause against what he called "the Gothic peril". Yesterday, when the familiar voice boomed into the silent night, I recognized the tone, the sentiments and the gross inaccuracies. He was like this two thousand years ago; he will be like this two thousand years hence.

By Intervention of Providence

By these signs I know him, though in this incarnation he has a Portuguese name, a Spanish-American aspect and English speech of calamitous fluency. These, however, are but externals, which cannot change the essence of

THE AUTOCRAT OF THE BOAT-DECK

"Take it from me! I bin there. I know Ab-so-loot-ly! . . . Dirty lot of dagos, that's what they are. Give me a hundred per cent. nigger; and I know where I am. But as soon as you begin mixing the blood . . ." "Tell you a thing that happened to me in Manila once." . . .

It is possible not to listen; it is impossible not to hear. The boat-deck is somewhat smaller than those you find on North Atlantic liners; the autocrat of the boat-deck is somewhat bigger than any man you have seen in any part of the seven seas; and yet he is a small man to have so huge a voice. Nature endowed him richly; but he has been helping nature all his life by drowning the voices of more diffident speakers.

"I tell you I *bin* there. I know."

Has some one ventured on a challenge? Undaunted spirit, you are no match for the autocrat in lung-power alone; and, had you the voice of a Danton, he would outlast you in sheer geography. He has shouted his way about five continents, has this autocrat, Paramaribo and Punta Arenas, Celebes and Penang, Harbin and Hankow, Macao and Inhambane all know him; he has been there, though from none of them has he brought away anything worth recalling. He has lived two or three score of years; he has met men and women by tens of thousands; all the while, his conscious and un-

From Kingston to Nassau

conscious memory have been at work. Nevertheless, when you set the disc revolving, the trumpet only brays again:

"I bin there. I see it with my own eyes. Ab-so-loot-ly! First time I was in Germany, it was in old Bismarck's day. They talked then about having to fight us sooner or later. That was right away back in the 'seventies." . . .

In the 'eighties, though he has now forgotten it, the autocrat was in St. Petersburg; and his Russian friends, growing indiscreet, told him frankly that they and he, sooner or later, would have to fight things out over Afghanistan and the North West Frontier. He predicted war in those far-off days; and he predicted it again in the nineties, when his French friends — he was in Paris at the time; so he knows — warned him openly that nothing but war would settle the dispute in north Africa. For this the French had been preparing since 1871.

After the Russo-Japanese War, the autocrat demonstrated that, with a vast, corrupt bureaucracy, no other result could be expected. Russia no longer counted in Europe, until 1914, when the western allies had only to hold their lines while countless millions of undefeated Russia rolled on to the gates of Berlin. If in the intervening ten years one great empire could be left out of account, its place was quickly taken by another. In 1905 the autocrat awoke to the Yellow Peril. He was genuinely thankful when Lord Lansdowne concluded a treaty with Japan; though, if China — with her teeming population — developed like Japan, Europe would be overrun in ten years. It was then that he lamented these

By Intervention of Providence

dissensions among the great powers of the west: he had been to Peking, he had seen with his own eyes, he knew that the great war (which would have to be fought sooner or later) would be between two continents and two colours.

"It's the white man against the yellow. I bin in 'Frisco. I know. And I bin in Sydney." . . .

The autocrat, who had with his own eyes seen some remarkable things in Ireland, knew all along (and was not afraid to say) that Home Rule meant Rome Rule, though — thanks to his first-hand knowledge of France — he was able to explain why Rome Rule had no place there. As a practical statesman he was convinced in 1912 and 1913 that there would be no peace in the Balkans until the Balkans had been held under the sea for five minutes, though he was one of the first to demonstrate, a year later, that only childish ignorance would lump together half-a-dozen different nationalities and argue as though there were no difference between the Servians, who preferred death to dishonour, and the Bulgars who liked dishonour for its own sake.

He is full of words, this autocrat, mostly of violent words, for he is nurtured on the head-lines of unreflecting newspapers. His rooted convictions burgeon and wilt with the convictions of the press: he despised the United States when they were too proud to fight (were the truth known, they were too busy making money. Ab-so-loot-ly! He had been in America; he knew); later he dreamed—and, in his sleep, talked loudly—of an eternal union between the English-speaking peoples; later still, he publicly washed his hands of the United

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States and allowed them to sneak back to their money-grubbing while he shouldered the settlement of a war-distracted world. The first essential of the settlement was that Germany should pay for the war which she had provoked (she was bursting with riches, as he could testify from the evidence of his own eyes); later, however, as no one man could squeeze blood from a stone (and you must visit Germany before you could believe her state of destitution), he felt and said that France was simply laying up trouble for the future by her filibustering raids into the Ruhr district. He, for one, would withdraw the Rhine army. . . .

You will find him on every boat-deck, in every club, in the smoking-car of every train. He is the parent and child of modern journalism, everything in turn and nothing long: the pendulum voter in every election. His capacity for harm . . .

Does any one believe him? Not his own countrymen, to be sure. He does not, indeed, mingle much with them, finding greatest honour outside his own country. Is it possible that among these scattered islands of the western Atlantic he is accepted as the spokesman of Europe? This ship carries Cubans, Spaniards, Americans, British West Indians; a few of them, perhaps, visit Europe once in three years; their ideas of Europe are built, for the most part, on meagre telegrams and on the abundant discourse of far-travelled and copiously informed strangers. Can you not hear the intelligent Bermudian growing autocratic in his turn, on the strength of our autocrat's information?

"You can't get blood from a stone! Ab-so-loot-ly!

By Intervention of Providence

If Germany had the means to pay, I'd certainly make her pay, but she's destitute. Until you've seen with your own eyes . . . Yes, I have! At least, I've had an exhaustive report from a man who knows Germany inside out and has travelled all over the country within the last few months. I give you my word, there's nothing to get; and the French knew that before ever they set foot in the Ruhr. They don't *want* to be paid. What they want is to smash the German coal and iron industries beyond hope of recovery. If they can grab the coal-fields for themselves, so much the better: that may help them to balance their budget. The trouble with the finances of the French is that they refuse to tax themselves adequately — if you'd been there, if you'd studied the question, you'd *know* — ; they've spent hundreds of millions in repairing their devastated areas, and most of the money has gone into the wrong pocket. The corruption in Paris . . .”

The autocrat's capacity for harm, if any one believe him, is unlimited. No sensible man, you say, would believe him, however much he documents his story with reference to Paramaribo and Inhambane. One would like to think that. And yet, and yet . . .

One has not, perhaps, visited the United States of America since “nation-wide prohibition” came into force. Was it a dream, or did one detect oneself autocratically dogmatizing about the effects of prohibition in America?

“Certainly I've been there; and fairly recently. Frankly, the country is too big for any one to know it properly, but you can't live long in any place without

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getting a certain idea . . . You may take it from me; prohibition has come to stay. Not because America wants it, but because the trade in illicit liquor is so profitable, the new liquor interest is so powerful, that it can't be reversed. Prohibition will be retained and evaded. The blockade-runners are subscribing huge sums to keep it.

"You'll find you can get all and more than all you want to drink . . . at a price. Under prohibition, America's consuming more alcohol than ever before. You see young girls at dances, unable to stand; young boys are expelled from school for being drunk. And prohibition has given an immense impetus to the traffic in drugs." . . .

Was it a dream? Or did one detect oneself talking like that, autocratically, to a fellow-passenger who will go back to England and say:

"I've never been in America, myself, but there was a man on the boat who knew it inside out and had quite lately travelled all over the country. Drunkenness in America is too appalling. You see mere boys and girls . . ." ?

It really seems as though the only difference between oneself and the other autocrats of the boat-deck is that their voices are always so overbearing and their information usually so inaccurate. . . .

AT SEA. 9 FEBRUARY, 1923.

By day-break the eastern horizon was dotted with the first of the Bahamas. After breakfast, I sighted Wat-

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ling's Island, where Columbus landed. You know, I suppose, that it was a toss-up whether he went on? Carl, his friend, wished him to turn back before he did any more mischief to the Old World; Columbus was more than half persuaded. They span a coin; and Carl lost.

Here, if you have not already heard it, is the story of

THE JUDGMENT OF COLUMBUS

Columbus. Well, here we are. Was it worth going on?

Carl, his friend. Turn back.

Columbus. I don't want to say 'I told you so'; but I always *did* feel, right down in my bones, that there was land here. Now you see!

Carl. I have seen. You have seen also. We were wrong; and you have proved us wrong. Why tarry?

Columbus (half to himself). Question is: whether it's worth while pressing on to the mainland. We can't go *much* farther, because there's this great continent in the way. I should say all these islands belonged to it at one time; and the western sea was either a desert or a big lake.

Carl. Turn back before it's too late.

Columbus. Eh? Oh, we shan't have any more mutinies now. Did you hear the look-out man singing "Hail, Columbia!" when he sighted land. I *told* them I'd find a new world; I've found it; and they'll follow me anywhere now. . . . Columbia: I shall call it that.

Carl. Call it nothing.

From Kingston to Nassau

Columbus. It must have a name of some kind; and as I've discovered it . . .

Carl. Say nothing about it. Turn back and say you never discovered it, that there was nothing to discover. . . .

Columbus. And let some other fellow get the credit?

Carl. There will be no credit. Your name will be reviled.

Columbus. One does n't discover new worlds every day.

Carl. That is well for what you and I must henceforth call "the old world." The world that was cradled in and about the Mediterranean is too old to match its strength against what *you* have discovered. We are more than three thousand miles away: Empire and Papacy are of small account here. If you go back and report what you have seen, you will shatter a system that was erected by Caesar Augustus and sanctified by the blessed Saint Peter.

Columbus. Well, why not?

Carl. Who can foresee the results? When the Empire loses its prestige in the blaze of your new world, the peoples of Europe will be at one another's throats. The Papacy, which was once œcumenical, will be found to have been ruling over a fraction of the earth's surface; thus the Church too will lose prestige.

Columbus. And then?

Carl. The voice of the blasphemer will make itself heard. Men of little faith will call for a reformation of the church. There will be endless wars between the Christians and the so-called reformers. More than that, the greedy and ambitious peoples of

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Europe will cast covetous eyes upon the fair lands which you have discovered. Portuguese and Dutchman and Spaniard and Frenchman and Englishman will carry their feuds to this side of the ocean.

Columbus (unimpressed). I should have thought there was enough here to satisfy everybody.

Carl. When princes begin to establish colonial empires, they are never satisfied. You are sowing the seeds of distant wars that will continue for uncounted generations.

Columbus. So long as they fight them out at a distance . . .

Carl. They will be felt in our old world. You are a faithful son of the church; you will hand your new world to the church; and it may be that the church, no longer œcumenical, with her prestige minished by you and with blasphemous reformers harrying her on every side, will give your new world to Portugal and Spain.

Columbus. In return therefor the faithful of Spain and Portugal will rally to the mother church and make a new crusade to stamp out the new heresies.

Carl. There will be wars in Europe, wars here; burning and plundering. You are giving the world one more continent for a battle ground.

Columbus. It will be better to fight them out here than in Europe. The Almighty had a reason for setting this ocean to divide the old world from the new.

Carl. But you have joined the new world to the old. Henceforth the world is one. Whoever prevails, after centuries of fighting, Europe will be exhausted.

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Columbus (after a pause). But, if I don't discover the place, someone else will.

Carl. What will be, will be. Your hands will be innocent of blood.

Columbus (dreamily). Columbia! . . . Columbia! . . . Look here, Carl, this is a biggish thing to discover. When you consider the size of my ship, the breadth of the Atlantic, my difficulties with the crew, the appalling food we've had to eat, I consider myself a pretty fair navigator. It's a tall order if I have to give all up. What's more, I like the look of the place.

Carl. You will not like it for long if you make it over to the rapacity of the old world.

Columbus. You keep harping on that! For all you know, I may come to be regarded as one of the world's greatest benefactors.

Carl. The new or the old?

Columbus. Both. The heathen here will be taught the truths of Christianity and the blessings of civilization.

Carl. You will teach the heathen only the vices of civilization.

Columbus (flippantly). Well, that's better than nothing. Life must be very dull without any vices.

Carl. You may be sure the heathen have their vices in full measure. They will teach them to you. That is the revenge that every people wreaks upon its conquerors. Last night I dreamed a dream, wherein I saw the people of our old world transfigured. They blew smoke from their mouths and noses; they maddened themselves with devilish brews; their priests, in

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white raiment, mixed magic potions with fiery water and frozen water, with sweets and bitters. I heard a voice saying: "First they will exhaust you, then they will corrupt you." In time you will have to adopt their own barbarous speech.

Columbus (disgustedly). Guess you're a doggone lively sort of mutt to take around on a world-discovering proposition. Well, I don't give a hill of beans either way. Throw us a buck. Heads we go on to the mainland; tails we go back and say nothing about it. (Tosses)

Carl. Heads it is. . . . What will be, will be. Now at least we shall not have to secure the silence of the crew by cutting their throats.

Columbus. (ecstatically). Columbia! . . . Columbia! . . . Hail, hail, Columbia! It's a sweet name and a sweet country. Yeh know, Carl, I couldn't have stood for it if this place had been discovered by some guy with a freak name like . . . oh, Amerigo . . .

AT SEA. 10 FEBRUARY, 1923.

We have wound in and out of the islands for a day and a half. Now Nassau harbour is in sight; and I have reached my journey's end.

PART FOUR
IN THE BAHAMAS

PART FOUR

In the Bahamas

NASSAU. 11 FEBRUARY, 1923.

Some three thousand islands go to make up the Bahamas. Of these, all but about twenty are uninhabited; and very many are little more than rocks. From their position, off the south-east coast of Florida, they form the first link in the chain of islands which divide the Caribbean Sea from the Atlantic. At some period it seems probable that all these islands were part of the mainland, which must then have stretched in a vast semi-circle from Florida to Venezuela; the Caribbean may then have been an inland sea, or it may have been dry land which was flooded, like the Mediterranean basin, when some volcanic disturbance broke the containing wall and divided the old mainland into the present islands.

Nassau itself lies outside the earthquake zone, outside the tropics and, to a great extent and for long stretches of time, outside human ken. It was at the end of the seventeenth century that the islands were granted to five Lords Proprietors, who surrendered them to the Crown nearly fifty years later, after a checkered his-

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tory of Spanish raids and destructions. The islands were ceded to Spain in 1782 and restored to Great Britain in the following year. The Lords Proprietors abrogated their last rights in 1787.

History condescends to notice the Bahamas in connection with the Spanish wars of the late seventeenth century and again in connection with West Indian piracy at the beginning of the eighteenth. Nassau leapt into brief prominence during the American Civil War as the port from which the English blockade-runners sailed for the South; and, since prohibition was imposed on the United States, it has become one of the bases from which the "boot-legging" industry is conducted. Happy the nation that has no history! For five hundred years the Bahamas have been remembered for a few moments in each century; America imports some of her early tomatoes from here; and, throughout the world, we wash ourselves with sponges that are gathered from these waters. Not one Englishman in a hundred could walk to a map and place his finger unerringly on the site of New Providence. The Bahamas have, until lately, been one of the best-kept secrets in the world; I should like to keep them a secret still, so that I could enjoy them selfishly. The secret, unfortunately, is not mine; and, if I cannot have the islands to myself, I should like to share them with those who can appreciate their charm and are worthy to live in

A LAND OF ETERNAL SUMMER

Not every one deserves the tropics. You hear the heat of Trinidad and Jamaica described by some people

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as excessive, though all right-thinking men know that natural heat can never be excessive. The heat of the Bahamas, which are only subtropical, is that of an English summer day. There is little variation during the twenty-four hours; you can wear the thinnest flannel or duck; there is a well-determined and easily avoided wet season; and you can bathe all the year round.

You can also fish. You can sail. You can play golf and lawn-tennis. You can rest. The two things that you cannot do are to work or worry. And that is why Nassau is a perfect place for a winter holiday. American visitors made that discovery some years ago; the English are making it now. You can get to Nassau from London in ten days if you go by New York and do not mind the cold of the north Atlantic; if you go by Jamaica, the voyage is a week longer, but you are in warm water as soon as you have passed the Azores. You can, if you like, cross from Florida by air; and, if you had to find your way unaided, I believe you would recognize New Providence by the colour of the water.

It cannot be described, because there are not enough words in English to cover a tenth of its varying shades. Turquoise, amethyst and sapphire predominate; but no part of it is the same for two minutes on end. When you think you have analysed it, the sun goes behind a cloud or sets; or the moon comes out; or you find that the first stars are being reflected; or you drift over a black ledge of rock; or you drift away from the rock over sand the colour of pale honey. If you lower a tea-cup at the end of an eighty-foot line, you can still

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see the handle. There are glass-bottomed boats; but I will come to them later.

On reaching Nassau, you anchor some distance out, to the north of Hog Island, with the lighthouse on your left hand. New Providence, very green against the blue of sea and sky, very flat by comparison with the islands of the south, stretches for twenty miles from east to west and for seven from north to south. Nassau has been made the capital of the Bahamas in virtue of its harbour; and the harbour is made for Nassau by the long protecting line of Hog Island. The channel between the two is filled with yachts and small sailing-boats; in the distance you can see the schooners of the "rum-running" fleet; and at all hours of the morning and afternoon there is a steady procession from the quay to the bathing-beaches, palm-shaded and white-sanded, of the island opposite.

Nassau is laid out in intersecting parallels. The principal offices and shops, the market and sponge-exchange, the vast New Colonial Hotel and the public buildings are distributed along Bay Street. Government House and the old Royal Victoria Hotel, each with its own garden, stand higher and farther from the sea. It is a city of wooden houses, pink, green and yellow, mostly of two storeys; with wide verandahs to shade and cool the living-rooms; a city of gardens and king-palm avenues; but, first and foremost, it is a city of the sea. To that you always come back; and it is always different. By that, in that, on that you live and work and play; to the sound of that you sleep and wake; a sight of that guides you in building your house.

In the Bahamas

Outside the city, the island is covered with a low green scrub, which is only cleared for the plantations of sisal, tomatoes and, formerly, of pineapples. You can see all that is to be seen of New Providence in two days; and, at the end, when you have got your bearings, there is a magic in the air that makes you feel you have always lived here, in one incarnation or another. Nowhere are you absorbed more quickly, more graciously into the life of the place.

Remember that the names of the months have lost their English meaning; remember that the worst winter in Nassau is better than the best summer in England. In February you are bathing by day and sleeping by night under a single sheet. You are glad to be up in time to see the sun rise: you are yet more glad to be alive when the sun sets and everything for a single moment changes colour before the warm, early night embraces you. Eternal beauty; eternal peace; eternal summer.

NASSAU. 12 FEBRUARY, 1923.

"Sir," said the inventor, Mr. Laughton O. Zigler, in Kipling's story The Captive, "I do not understand the alleged British joke."

For three years there has been an alleged joke against the United States, which — in fairness to British humour — has been fostered by the citizens of the United States themselves. It is a joke that can be seen coming a mile off. A reference to the Statue of Liberty, to hip-pockets, to 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,' to 'Pussyfoots' and 'boot-leggers' should be a sufficient signal:

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some one is going to be facetious about prohibition. How weary all Americans must be of that question: "Do you think it will last?" How weary the Bahamians have become of sly references to whiskey-running! Prohibition, from the standpoint of those who promoted it and those who opposed it, never was a joke; it is now

THE SORRIEST STORY IN THE WORLD

The United States of America are bounded on the north by Canada, on the south by Mexico and on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, in which Cuba and the Bahamas are situated nearest to the main land. Wines and spirits may no longer be imported into the United States; but, as the demand for them has increased in proportion to the difficulty of obtaining them, wines and spirits are in fact smuggled over the frontiers by land, sea and air. As in the Civil War, cargoes of contraband are shipped to Nassau and cleared thence for ultimate, though not avowed, destination in the United States. It is the business of the Federal Government to uphold its own laws; it is not the business of the Canadian, British, Cuban nor Mexican governments to interfere. As this smuggling has become associated in the public mind pre-eminently with the Bahamas, it is well to remember that Canada, Mexico and Cuba are equally or more convenient bases of supply; as, further, it is sometimes believed that the Bahamas have become the spirituous home of thirsty Americans, it is well to state that this is a libel both on America and on the Bahamas.

So much for the facts. Now for the principles underlying them.

In the Bahamas

The private habits of a free people, on any accepted definition of liberty, can only be regulated by government when the interests of the whole community are affected. If it be proved that opium-smoking so far demoralizes the smoker as to injure or menace society, the majority in a community may prohibit opium-smoking. It has never been proved that the former consumption of alcohol was adversely affecting the interests of America; the community as a whole was never consulted; and prohibition was imposed by the state and federal legislatures at the end of a long and skilful political campaign, as the result of disinterested enthusiasm, interested finance, war-hysteria, blackmail, bribery and wide-spread indifference.

The methods by which the Volstead Law was passed are primarily the concern of America. The effects are the concern of all other democratic countries. Industrial efficiency has increased; but whether this is due to prohibition, to the evasion of prohibition or to the opportunities of a trade-boom after the war cannot yet be determined. Crime has also increased and may be attributed by partisan predilections to the diminution of legitimate, or to the growth of illegitimate, drinking. It is not disputed by those who are most sensitive for the good name of America that

- (a) many who drank in moderation before the Volstead Law was passed now drink to excess,
- (b) many drink now who never drank before, and
- (c) all who have the means have also the power to obtain whatever liquor they want.

By Intervention of Providence

The citizens of a nominally free country are deprived of the right to live as they please within their own houses; the poorer citizens of a country where all are equal before the law have, for economic reasons, to obey a law which the richer citizens defy and break with impunity. Those who maintained that if the youth of one generation grew up without tasting alcohol, that and succeeding generations would have no desire to taste it, now see the youth of America's first "dry" generation, boys and girls alike, drinking at an earlier age and in larger quantities than their predecessors.

It is an instructive lesson. For the future, all states that are ruled under representative institutions must recognize that a law passed by whatever majority of a legislature is not binding unless it is supported by the majority of those upon whom it is imposed. It must be recognized, further, that, when a law is persistently evaded, the law-breakers set up a vested interest in evasion. Finally, when respect for law is attacked in one part, it is attacked in all. No democracy, no form of government ever devised or imagined, can continue to function when each man decides for himself what laws he shall obey, when by maintaining the law in word and breaking it in deed every man has "the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice."

To that unvarying question: "How long will prohibition last?", there is an unvarying answer. The saloons are gone for ever; and in practice no one regrets them. The law may be modified to admit beers and light wines; but there will be no modification in favour of spirits.

This does not mean that spirits will be unobtainable.

In the Bahamas

They are, they will continue to be, so readily obtainable that the law needs not to be amended; were it amended, a new vested interest would be ruined. Prohibition will be defended to the last by the state and federal authorities who are charged with the duty of enforcing it; but their defence will be a pale shadow of the grim struggle which we may expect from those who amass fortunes by evading prohibition. There is the distiller, the bottlemaker, the agent, the shipper: all can ask their own prices, for America is rich, America is ruled by fashion; and it is unfashionable not to have all the spirits you want. There is an army of men to discharge the whiskey, store it, load it; there is a whole merchant-marine to carry it into American territorial waters. And, once there, it is passed from hand to hand: the wholesale importer, the retailer, the railwayman, the policeman, the bell-boy in the hotel. The price of each bottle goes up with every hand that touches it; in the vast new industry of boot-legging every one stands to be ruined if spirits are allowed to be imported at their old price and with their old ease. Your smuggler is ready as ever to strike a blow for himself. The men who race over the border in motor lorries, shooting all who try to stop them, are not going to let "the booze party" take the bread out of their children's mouths.

The Volstead Law may be modified because it is so hard to explain in democratic language why the rich man may drink whiskey while the poor man may not drink beer. It will not be repealed; and, though ridicule can kill most things, money can keep them alive against ridicule. The war-chest of prohibition will be

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kept filled by the boot-leggers. And what of the next law that any one dislikes? America is too big, too heterogeneous, too impetuous, too young and too rich for any deep instinctive reverence for law. The way has now been shown: when next a burden too great to be borne is laid upon her citizens, they can say: "We stood out against prohibition. We defeated it. What we did once we can do again." . . .

In time, it is to be presumed and hoped, drunkenness will cease to be fashionable; is it too much to hope that America will learn to drink according to the mode of civilized European countries? She had not begun when prohibition cut short her education. Strong spirituous mixtures, taken on an empty stomach, with iced water as an antidote and rye whiskey as soon as it was safe to begin again: this was the deliberate choice of America, when all the golden hocks and champagnes, the kingly clarets and ports, the imperial burgundies lay at her disposal. Some countries get the prohibition they deserve. From beginning to end, it is the sorriest story in the world.

NASSAU. 13 FEBRUARY, 1923.

I am glad to be done with it, this story of prohibition, with its attendant passions and dreary jokes. It is an American problem; and in the Bahamas we are only interested because from her, as from all countries adjoining the United States, cargoes of liquor are shipped for an ultimate American destination; and that brings money to these islands; and too much money unsettles

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the coloured folk; and most people would be thankful if the trade came to an end; and I shall be more than thankful if I never hear the word "prohibition" again. These islands are too beautiful to be associated, even erroneously, with an idea of one-day trips from Florida and ten-hour debauches in disreputable saloons. These things do not in fact happen. Here you bathe and sail and bathe again, from beaches of powdered coral; you play lawn-tennis, you dance; and, if you happen to be an American lady of a certain age, you shelter yourself from the sun, you turn your back on the view and you play bridge the live-long day. . . .

And, after all, why not? If it makes you happy, there is little to be said. It is the first business of every one on these islands to be happy in his own fashion.

NASSAU. 14 FEBRUARY, 1923.

A feast and a fast on the same day! That was a bit of clumsiness in the man who made this year's calendar. Will Mr. Walker — or, failing him, Mr. Lett — kindly explain how any one can reconcile valentines with salt fish?

*"Tucked within this book you 'll see
Lots of love, all sent by me." . . .*

That, I thought, was charming; and, shutting my eyes to the perpetual June sunshine of this place, I realized that this must be Saint Valentine's Day. To make sure, I called in Walker and Lett. Yes, it was February the Fourteenth right enough; but it was also Ash Wednes-

By Intervention of Providence

day. I was not prepared for that. We had no pancakes yesterday (I must tell you some time of certain savage rites connected with pancakes). There has been no hint of a carnival. . . .

“No pancakes yesterday,” I said at luncheon. “No salt fish to-day.”

I thought I was speaking to myself, but I must have been overheard. A change stole over the cheerful face of the Catholic priest opposite me. Something that he was ordering — could it have been a steak? — was scratched out; something else was substituted. How, after that, could I go on with the dainty fare which I had myself ordered? If the hotel supplied no salt fish, I must supply it myself. And that is how I became initiated into

THE FINEST FISHING IN THE WORLD

We met on the quay at eleven o'clock: the skipper of the launch, three silent, wise men with whom Walton would have been proud to claim kinship, a tenderfoot like myself, the native crew and a big, wistful Labrador retriever. Though the stars were reflected in the water like clusters of white beads, there was no moon; and we stumbled on board by the light of electric torches.

By one o'clock in the morning we were clear of the northwest end of the island; the first fishing-ground was at hand. We dropped anchor and turned in to wait for the daylight. In a dinghy at our stern lay big conch-shells, the bait for deep-sea fishing; there was a box of live-bait for the trolling; and, in the little galley,

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I saw spices and condiments innumerable. We looked at the sky, listened to the wind and discussed our prospects.

“No catch, no chowdah,” the skipper ordained.

We were gulping hot coffee in the warm darkness of an hour before sun-rise. I watched the trolling lines being baited. I listened with misgiving to a report that the wind had changed in the night and that we could not make an anchor hold in the best ground. Then I wished the silent wise men “good sport” with wholly genuine fervour. No catch, no chowdah? There were bananas, sandwiches, eggs and the like to ward off starvation; but it was some talk of chowdah, heard four thousand miles away, more than any desire for fish on Ash Wednesday, that had sent me on this expedition.

For an hour after dawn we steamed slowly up and down under the lee of the island. No luck, unless you call it luck to be alive in such a place at such a time. The water near in to land was liquid emerald; you could see the powdered-coral sand to a depth which I hesitate to guess; and, as you moved out, the water changed to liquid sapphire and from that to liquid amethyst, with streaks of pure violet and sheets of turquoise. Nowhere in the world have I seen such colours, never have I breathed such air.

At the first “drop”, when we had abandoned our fruitless trolling, we fished at a depth of some five-and-thirty fathoms. No rods to-day, but stout hand-lines with a six-ounce lead and a pair of hooks like salmon-gaffs. The meat was taken out of the conches, pounded soft and cut into slices; the lines were paid out; silence

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fell on the boat. Then there was a tug; and one line was hauled in, hand over hand.

The fish in these waters are legion, though not all of them are edible. For our chowdah we should have been content with a few of the big pink-and-white "snappers;" and, as the first line was hauled in, we saw a pink head and a white underside. That, alas!, was all. The line for some moments had seemed slack. Our snapper had been cut in two an inch below the head; and a shark was breakfasting off the promise of our chowdah.

"Get out a shark-line," ordered the skipper; and, as the snapper's head was hooked to a quarter-inch line, I began to understand the nature of this deep-sea fishing.

Here, in the right place, any one can catch a fish; and on good days you haul them in at such a rate that your boat is full in half-an-hour. Between the snapper and his like on one side and you and your toothsome conch on the other there is no fair match; when it is a trial of skill between you and a shark, with the snapper for prize, you have all the excitement you want. Another tug! Another line hauled in! Another sudden slackening! The shark has won again: only the head of the snapper is left, only enough to bait another shark-line.

So long as we do his fishing for him, there is no need for the shark to trouble about the fragmentary heads with which we try to tempt him. And yet he is so greedy, so everlastingly hungry that he can let nothing pass him by. There is a pull on the shark-line; and, as it is hauled in, the skipper loads a rifle. The man with the line gets a purchase for his feet and makes the

In the Bahamas

end fast to a ring, for in playing a shark there is always the chance that he will pull you into the water, always the risk — in a small boat — that he will charge it like a torpedo and overturn you. Again no luck! He has got away. Got away and is now on one of the ordinary lines! The rifle is reinforced by a revolver; the line is drawn in; it is like trying to lift the bed of the ocean! Then the line slackens. In addition to his two snappers, the shark has breakfasted off six ounces of lead and a pair of steel hooks.

While a new line is prepared and baited, one of the silent, wise men has a bite. The line comes up like lightning, with a native boy helping him to pull. Pace before everything! And, for reward, a double haul: both hooks carry a fish. Our chowdah is secured to us. While it is preparing, we go on as before; soon, despite the sharks, we have more fish than we need, but the hooks we have lost outnumber the fish we have landed; and those accursed sharks have gone scot-free unless we have contrived to give them lead-poisoning or dyspepsia.

There are as many ways of making a chowdah as of mixing a cocktail. There are as many possible ingredients. If you ask: "What should be put in?", you may be answered simply with a short list of what can be left out. There are things you taste and never see, things you see and never taste. I am a tyro: I have eaten it but once and have never seen it made, yet I will venture on a recipe:

Take sufficient grey mullet for every man to have six. Bone them, clean them, skin them and fry them in butter. Break them up and place them in a cauldron

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with sliced potatoes, onions, pork, biscuits, red pepper, anchovies, tomatoes, limes, sherry, pickles, sweet chutnee, Worcester sauce, hot chutnee, all the spices you can find and a few hard-boiled eggs. Serve in a soup-plate and eat with a spoon. The hard-boiled eggs may be unorthodox, but they go well with it. Everything goes well with chowdah: not least the cigar that follows the banquet and the sleep of repletion that follows the cigar.

NASSAU. 15 FEBRUARY, 1923.

I am hungry whenever I think of it: that chowdah which I ate because the hotel provided no salt fish on Ash Wednesday. Will there be better arrangements for to-morrow, the first Friday in Lent? I shall take no risks. No risks are being taken on my behalf. For days before I came to New Providence, the neighbouring waters were being scoured. To-morrow I attend a turtle-feast. Meanwhile, as my thoughts are running on food, I must tell you, as I promised, of the barbarous rites connected with

PANCAKES

Antiquarians may know why the pancake is a national institution on Shrove Tuesday in England, but I have not met the man who could explain to me the Pancake Greeze. Like everything else at Westminster, its origin is hidden by the mists of the middle ages. We knew about it before we went there; we took it on trust; as new boys, we were shewn, at the south end of School,

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the high bar over which the pancake had to be tossed. And then, having no time to spare on the calendar, we forgot about Shrove Tuesday until the school sergeant went his rounds of the form-rooms and we were told that to-day there was to be a "play" or half-holiday.

"And," said our form-masters, "you will now elect your representative for the Greeze."

In old days, the whole school engaged in this annual contest; but the turmoil was too great, and Rutherford ordained that only one member of each form should be allowed to enter. In the Fourths and Removes and Fifths there is keen competition to be chosen and no little lobbying, for a guinea is always a guinea, and the Lower School is always insolvent. You may be crushed almost to death, but you can only die once; you will come out of that greeze, if you come out at all, more like a dishevelled sweep than anything else, but a little dust and a few torn clothes matter little in those early days, before you have developed strong views on the crease in your trousers and the colour of your socks. It is supremely important that you should be elected; you scatter your promises like a parliamentary candidate; if you get that pancake, the whole form shall feast at your expense.

In the Upper School there is less enthusiasm. If you are of the burly kind that Nature intended to win pancake-greezes, you may have infinite difficulty in escaping the honour which your fellows would impose upon you. Once elected, you cannot, of course, decline; nor may you loiter on the outskirts of the fray. You must throw body and soul into the struggle; and you will come out

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with a dusty face, a broken collar, a torn coat and ruined trousers. In the Upper School there is keen competition and no little lobbying to secure that some one else shall die for the people. The burly creature whom you see buttonholing his friends as you come out of Abbey is probably urging them to plump for young Williams. There are a dozen good reasons why young Williams should die for the people. He is a "scadger," as the King's Scholars of St. Peter's College, Westminster, are sometimes called; he is a "muzz," always at the top of the form; he is — happy thought — younger, smaller and weaker than any of his fellows. He is sure to be hurt; with any luck he will be killed; certainly his glasses will be broken.

"The representative of the Upper Shell," proclaims the master of that form, as he empties the ballot-papers into his basket, "is . . . er, Williams. Elected unanimously. . . . If any one feels constrained to cheer, I shall feel constrained to enter his name for penal drill. We will not go on at *Tithoni croceum linquens*." . . .

Our duty as electors faithfully accomplished, we return to our construe. What does it matter if young Williams should go up three places? There is a legend that condemned prisoners are allowed to choose their last breakfast on earth. Let him get what happiness he can. He has but a few hours to live. His parents would like to know that he died at the top of the form; and so young Williams is told, as the form hurries out half-an-hour before prayers.

Under that iron bar at the south end of School, the appointed champions are ranged in line. The Dean's

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verger enters with his silver mace, followed by the college cook in white cap and apron, bearing before him a glutinous pancake on a frying-pan. He passes through the waiting line of champions and stations himself behind them in the gangway between the chairs on which the rest of us are standing. A deep silence falls upon School. Though they dare not turn round, the champions know that the cook is eying that bar, working his arm free, swinging his pan. . . .

Tradition says the Dean of Westminster pays him a guinea if he tosses the pancake over the bar, two if he sends it over a higher bar up in the rafters. He is allowed three tries though he seldom needs more than one; and tradition states that the cook who fails at the third attempt has been, may and should be torn limb from limb.

There is no sound as the pancake rises and begins to fall. There is a sound like the outbreak of revolution when it comes in sight. The champions move forward in a solid mass with hands up-stretched; there is grabbing, tearing; the hand that has secured all or most of the prize buries it inside a coat; you may know who has the pancake when you see one champion hurl himself face downwards on the wooden floor while all the others leap on top of him and try to tear it away. The fight goes on for two minutes: it is too short for those at the top of this writhing mass; for those at the bottom it is probably enough. When time is called, the victor exhibits his prize to the Head Master and staggers out of School at the heels of the Dean's verger, to follow that gleaming mace to the Deanery door and receive his well-

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earned guinea. The others wipe pancake and dust from their clothes and hair; the school settles into place for prayers; young Williams, who bears a charmed life, resumes his gown; and the unsuccessful competitors prepare explanation of their failure.

So it goes on from year to year, its origin concealed in the mists of the middle ages. Its annals would make monotonous reading, though perhaps once in twenty years there is something to mark off one greeze from the rest. Such an event was the meeting of David and Goliath at a time when all the people who mattered were thirteen years old. Goliath had oppressed David and his like for two terms; and David, for want of weight and inches, could make no retaliation until the pancake-greeze rendered them equal in the sight of God. Goliath represented the Upper Shell, David the Under Fifth. Goliath caught the pancake and threw himself face-downwards on the floor; David threw himself face-downwards on Goliath and caught him by his left coat-tail. When the struggle ended, Goliath had his pancake and received his guinea; but all the pomp and consequence of walking behind a silver-maced verger to the Deanery door could not conceal that he had but one tail to his coat.

The other, as soon as prayers were over, was fixed with drawing-pins to the inside of David's locker-door.

NASSAU. 16 FEBRUARY, 1923.

Yesterday I sailed to one of the islands for a turtle-feast. Nassau—its natives and visitors alike—has

In the Bahamas

carried picnics to a height unimagined in England, where it is generally said that all women love them and all men loathe them. This I do not believe, as the women have to shoulder the burden of preparing and packing the meal, washing up and packing up afterwards; at worst the men have only to carry the hampers if they can find no deputy. I do believe, indeed I know, that every proper man in England hates a picnic for the two sufficient reasons that he hates an uncomfortable seat and an inadequate meal; and yet neither is necessary to

THE PERFECT PICNIC

A minor royalty of the fecund Germanic race was once asked by his English hostess, during a rare spell of hot weather, if he minded having his meals out of doors.

“Nein, nein!”, he answered graciously, “brovided the vive brincibal meals of the day be dagen indoor.”

And, as he was in England, his decision was probably right: when it is hot enough in England to carry chairs and tables out of doors, it is hot enough for the diners to be eaten alive by midges. If you dispense with chairs and tables, you are involved in the full horror of an English picnic; and this means hard-boiled eggs, moist rolls and melting butter, tepid chicken and an embittered search for the forgotten salt. Even in these latter days of sex-equality, the men must make a show of willingness to carry the luncheon-baskets; and the luncheon-basket of a seasoned picnicker has six corners and no handle. While the men stumble uneasily

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under a burden that stabs them spitefully in the side of their knees, the women — by training domestic, by nature æsthetic — choose a place for the banquet. So long as they have a good view, they are indifferent to ant-hills, or at least to the warning that they have chosen an ant-hill for their table; when they have made the discovery for themselves, they are prompt to repack the feast and to see it carried, in baskets with six corners and no handles, up the face of the nearest cliff.

They order this matter better in the Bahamas. There the only difference between a meal indoors and a meal in the open air is that, out of doors, you eat the same delicious things in vastly greater quantities. Some one, to be sure, will hazard that food tastes better out of doors; but that is only because some one has tasted more food than usual. The first rule of a picnic is that you should not be penalized for your good nature in attending it: whatever you are accustomed to expect at home you are entitled to receive abroad. *Punch* lately satirized a chauffeur who refused a glass of champagne on the plea that he never drank a younger vintage than 1906; but the satire recoiled, for *Punch* can know little of picnics.

To see a Nassau launch provisioning, you might think that you were to cross the Atlantic; yet there is not one thing too much. If the broken meats of luncheon justify it, you can always glide imperceptibly on to dinner. Time does not matter, at the time; and it is always better to return by moonlight; if indeed you must ever return.

In the middle of the morning, you go on board; at

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noon you draw in to the island of your choice and bathe in hot turquoise water while the crew carries ashore the barrels and cases on which your life is shortly to depend. A fire is lighted; and the turtle, half prepared already, is set to stew. When the bathers return, every man puts his hand to the task for which he has been fitted by nature or experience. An up-ended crate in the shade of a palm-tree constitutes the bar; while one crushes the ice, another squeezes the limes and a third measures the rum. Glasses are handed, to the whirring accompaniment of the swizzle-stick; they are filled, emptied and washed under another palm-tree, while the unpacking and laying go steadily on. The savour of the seething turtle is almost unbearably tempting: if you had no work to do, you could not help attacking it before it was ready; and a strained, unhappy silence falls on the picnic, till a distant cry warns you to make ready. A labouring figure hurries across from the fire, bearing the precious turtle — chopped into collops — in its own inverted shell. You help yourself with a ladle and eat from a soup-plate, pouring lime and sherry and red-hot sauce and peppers ‘to taste’. And then there is a second silence until a whisper travels that the shell is not yet empty.

If you can, you may eat spaghetti with your turtle or after it; you can, you must then eat pimento cheese and guava jelly; and then black coffee will not come amiss; and then the long blissful silence of contented satiety.

There is no limit to numbers in a Nassau picnic: difference of size only means a difference of organization. When fifty or sixty men and women in high condi

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tion are invited to meet for the single purpose of gratifying their appetites, Sybaris has its laws; and all must obey them. There is a loaded table, with a hungry line on the one side and a row of servers on the other. As you approach, the first hands you a plate, the second a knife and fork, the third a noble slice of hot turkey. Ham and tongue, salad and bread are added as you pass down the line; you are handed a cocktail in a paper cup and told to find yourself a seat and a companion. Later, when you are wedged in place, the servers return. One takes your plate, another your knife and fork; a third gives you a fresh plate, with more food. You began with an ice-cold cocktail; you end with boiling coffee. It is the first rule of a picnic that you shall be denied nothing that you would have had if you had dined at home; on an island where picnics are understood, you have more than all that you would get if you dined at home.

And you need not stumble under the weight of a crazy hamper while the women of the party look for a good view. Wherever you turn, there is white sand for a table, there are palm trees for shade, there is Nassau sea for a view; and the meat and drink are carried up from the boat by some one else. It is perfect.

At least, it is as nearly perfect as a picnic can be. If you have seen that Nassau moon at the full, shining over a sea of rustling blue satin; if you have felt the warm caress of a Nassau night; if you have heard a solitary voice, singing unaccompanied, as though the singer's heart were breaking, you would recall emotions that are beyond description. That is the frame; and, within it,

In the Bahamas

is an Arabian night's entertainment, where you clap your hands and see your wishes instantly, amply and noiselessly fulfilled. "*There are men,*" some one murmurs, "*men born of women, who would eat indoors on such a night as this, like prisoners in their cells.*" . . .

There was that minor royalty of the fecund Germanic race . . .

As nearly perfect as a picnic can be? Let it be admitted frankly that there was one thing lacking; there is always one thing lacking, but it was not discovered till the day when a launch ran aground and the picnic was ruined. Twelve men and women met at noon and heard, an hour later, that no boat was coming for them. The feast was prepared; it had to be eaten. With slow steps and sorrowful faces the party trudged to the nearest house and resigned itself to eating within doors. Life needed to be supported. While the barrels and cases were unpacked on the lawn, the turtle was set to seethe and a table was laid on a cool verandah. Chairs were collected; and, while one crushed the ice, another squeezed the limes and a third measured the rum. Glasses were handed round, to the whirring accompaniment of a swizzle-stick; they were filled, emptied and washed. The turtle appeared . . .

No one else had the honesty to make open confession. They pretended that they were gamely hiding their disappointment. One man alone — no prince, no German — admitted candidly that, for a picnic to be perfect, it must be taken indoors.

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NASSAU. 17 FEBRUARY, 1923.

I have told you that the Bahamas were a well-kept secret until America discovered them to be an ideal destination for a winter holiday. Of the visitors who come to New Providence year after year, the majority are American. By their clothes and speech you will know them; and, even when they are silent, even when you cannot see their distinctive dress, you would recognize them by their passion for introductions. It is said that, when the first contingent of the American army crossed to Europe, an Englishman went on board to bid one friend good-bye and was incontinently introduced to the whole contingent. It is a national custom; and, if the English find it unnecessary or even annoying, that is because they, unlike Americans, seldom hear names and never remember them. I have travelled half-way round the world with people whose names I did not know at the end: I did not want to know them; we should have shed a valued piece of armour if any one had introduced us. Among the English it is a national custom not to introduce. "I expect you know everybody here," is a sufficient indication that you may now speak to any one who will listen to you. Should you wish to carry the intimacy farther, there is usually a visitors'-book and always a butler to help you.

America, not understanding this national custom, imputes it to rudeness; England, not appreciating the delight of knowing a man's name for a moment of time between two eternities, fidgets and flushes at a ceremony that seems superfluous. "They say they're pleased to

In the Bahamas

meet me," you will hear; "and I don't believe it." Well, the English are prone to ask Americans how they do; and I doubt very much whether they really care. This difference in national custom is but one of the myriad tiny obstacles to that sympathetic understanding which the Pilgrims, the English-Speaking Union and a dozen other bodies are labouring to establish. Lately I was privileged to watch the good work at close quarters.

AS OTHERS SEE US

The playwright was a patriot first and a playwright afterwards. When that has been said, any student of the drama is prepared for the worst: this story, therefore, is addressed to patriots that they be warned against using the stage for other purposes than drama. This patriotic playwright was haunted by the fear that, unless America and England drew closer together, they would either remain where they were or else drift farther apart. To avert this, he would stop at nothing, even at a patriotic drama; and, as audiences care nothing for general principles and everything for their application, he described his play as an international problem with a strong love-interest. The first scene was laid in neutral ground: the boat-deck of a North-German-Lloyd outside the three-mile limit both of America and of England.

The Marquis of St. George (resuming the coronet which he has laid aside to propose and rising from his knees). Then you *will* marry me?

Miss Alabama P. Hunch. I certainly will.

(They embrace)

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St. George (modestly). Dunno what your people will think of me, I'm sure.

Alabama (with rapture). They'll be jest crazy about you. (Uncertainly) Guess your folk . . .

St. George. My dear girl, they'll simply adore you!

Alabama. And if they don't?

St. George. If they don't like it, they can lump it! It would be the easiest thing in the world for us to run away and get married without asking any one's leave; but, if we send off a couple of wireless messages now, we can shew the news being broken to your people —

Alabama. Folk. You must get wise on 'folk', honey.

St. George. To your folk in the second act.

Alabama. And to *your* folk —

St. George. People. If you could learn to call them my 'people', it would help things.

Alabama. To your people in the third. That's fine!

St. George. It surely is.

CURTAIN.

The second scene of the first act is laid in the same place. Twenty-four hours have elapsed; and Alabama and St. George are discovered each with a marconigram.

Alabama (in amazement). He says — my dad does — he'd sooner see me in my grave than married to an English lord.

St. George. My father says very much the same thing. (Reads) 'You are dishonouring my name and breaking your mother's heart.'

Alabama (defiantly). He figures we're kinda bums.

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St. George. Well, your respected parent does n't seem to think very highly of *us*.

Both. If we could only see ourselves as they see us!

CURTAIN.

And in the two acts following, as the audience anticipates, the playwright depicts the American father's conception of the family into which his daughter wishes to marry and the English father's conception of American family life.

The English Scene

A thin, whiskered man in a buttoned frock-coat is sitting in a panelled hall, surrounded by portraits of vicious ancestors. His coronet betrays his dukedom. There are many dogs blind with age and halt with rheumatism, much port wine and no central heating. The numerous servants wear silk stockings, monocles and powder. No one speaks, hardly any one moves; but the wind whistles drearily. When effeteness and decay have been exhibited sufficiently, the curtain falls.

The American Scene

Through the windows of the apartment-house parlour the audience obtains a clear if rather bewildering view of the Woolworth Building, Niagara, the Elevated Railway and half Texas, with cowboys galloping round the Washington Memorial. Ebenezer P. Hunch, Alabama's father, is indistinguishable from any one else who roars and stamps through this hustling scene: all the men are in shirt-sleeves and horn spectacles; each carries a revolver on one hip and a flask of whiskey on the other;

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and, though the room is supposed to be part of a private residence, every one has his own glass-topped table, spittoon, telephone and tape-machine.

Iced water is freely consumed as a corrective to the steam-heating, which is indicated by red-hot coils. There is no dialogue, but every one talks at once; and the audience may know in a moment, from the language employed, that the scene is laid in America.

Voices. Say, listen! . . . Hell, I gotta dig down in my grip to find my cuspidor. . . . Oh, *boy!* . . . Say, like to have yeh meet Duke of Mercia. Pleased to meet you, Duke of Mercia. This your first visit N'York? It certainly is. . . .

When the noise becomes unbearable and a sufficient number of fortunes have been made and lost on Wall Street, the curtain mercifully descends.

In the next act Alabama and St. George are still on their boat-deck, but they are visibly changed. St. George now wears a hat of brown plaited straw, a jacket of white drill, knicker-bockers, shooting stockings, black-and-white canvas shoes and horn spectacles. He is learning to spit, to reckon in dollars and to whistle *The Star-Spangled Banner*.

St. George (taking Alabama's hand). Say, listen, honey,

I guess when we started out on this vac-cation—

Alabama. Holiday, we call it. I say, it's the most awful bore about our dud parents.

St. George. It certainly is.

Alabama. Don't you think, if we could arrange . . . ?

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St. George (eagerly). Have them get together?

Alabama (dreamily). Not them alone. If the two great English-speaking peoples . . .

St. George (in perplexity). Snow again. I don't get your drift.

Alabama. Why should you and I suffer for the sins of a stupid old king who's been dead more than a hundred years? Let us make it our business to show England and America what the other really is.

St. George (with emotion). You've spoke a mouthful, kid.

CURTAIN.

And, in the last act, America and England — represented by Mr. and Mrs. Ebenezer P. Hunch of Detroit, Mich., and by the Duke and Duchess of Mercia — see one another as they really are.

Such a play was lately produced in the United States, by one who was a patriot first and a playwright afterwards. Perhaps that is the reason why its run, by the latest advices, was not long.

NASSAU. 18 FEBRUARY, 1923.

Yes, I am of the great majority that detests a superfluous introduction. A man's name is commonly the least interesting or important thing about him; and a woman's name, so frequently changing, is yet less important than a man's. Once you have been introduced, you lose half the joy of speculating about your neighbours; and the tales they tell you of themselves are seldom so romantic as the tales you tell yourself about

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them. She whom I will call Mélisande told me the story of her life — or at least all of it that mattered to me — in one sentence, five minutes after I had been presented to her. I do not doubt its truth any more than I doubt its dulness; but I prefer the story I made up for her.

MÉLISANDE'S RING

Perhaps this should be called *The Ring of Mélisande*, for it was through her ring that I became interested in her. We were staying in the same hotel; and her table was next to mine. At dinner on the night of my arrival I diagnosed the family with what proved afterwards to be fair accuracy. It consisted of Mélisande's father and mother; her elder sister; her brother-in-law; and her younger brother. Mélisande herself was unmarried; and, from her indifference to the patent devotion of the young men on the spot, I fancied that her thoughts must be elsewhere.

Whatever the state of her heart, however, her hand was at present free. That I noticed on the first night of all: Mélisande wore many rings, but none on the third finger of her left hand. And then, before we had been a week together in that hotel, the bare place was filled with a big and aggressively flashing diamond.

All the world loves a lover. For once, I almost wished that some one *would* introduce us and give me a chance of congratulating Mélisande. I wanted to hear all about everything; and now, thanks to my absurd diffidence, I could only sit and speculate. Well, it was better than nothing; indeed, I soon decided that to speculate

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was more amusing than to know, for *Mélisande's* young admirers were an arresting study. There were five or six of them; they were all unblushingly in love with her; and none of them seemed to mean more to her than any other. Quite clearly that ring had not come from any of these boys whom I saw buzzing about her, though it did not deter them from continuing to pay their futile attentions.

And then the ring disappeared. This was on a Monday; and I remember the day because I was expecting certain letters from America. We had three mails a week from Florida and two direct from New York, on Mondays and Thursdays. I was on my way back from the post office when I overtook *Mélisande* in the gardens of the hotel. She was frowning over a letter; and, as she restored it to its envelope, I saw that she was wearing no ring. My last thought was to spy on her; but, when I was accustomed to see her reading on the verandah, I could not help noticing that the verandah was empty. *Mélisande* was late for luncheon; and I heard her saying that she had been finishing an important letter before the New York mail closed. She also said that she had a headache and would spend the afternoon in her room.

It was dreadfully easy to guess what had happened. The engagement was over; and I did not care whether she had broken it off for something that the man had done or whether he had written to say that he was engaged to some one else. He was a scamp either way; and *Mélisande* was well rid of him; but my heart ached for her. She was young, of course, and would get over

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it; but it was too early for her to realize that. Meanwhile, she was very dignified and self-controlled; I have no doubt that the letter which had to catch the New York mail would make that young man writhe, but *Mélisande* behaved to her family and her friends as though nothing had happened.

I should have forgotten that she had ever worn a ring if I had not seen it again a week later. Another New York mail was in; I had called at the post office and was again returning through the hotel garden when I overtook *Mélisande*. There was only one explanation of the diamond that once more flashed aggressively from the third finger of her left hand: the engagement had been renewed, the young scamp had prayed to be forgiven and *Mélisande* was hurrying to tell him, before the outward mail closed, that she was once more wearing his ring. I was not altogether easy in mind, but I hoped that this lesson would make the young scamp steadier. *Mélisande* was again late for luncheon; I daresay her excuse was the same, but I was not interested to hear it. As she hurried in to the dining room, I saw one hand go up to tidy her hair; it was the left hand; it carried no ring on its third finger.

From that moment my speculations went to pieces. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday the mail came in from Florida; on Monday and Thursday from New York. Sometimes there was a letter for *Mélisande*; sometimes there was not. Sometimes she wore the ring; sometimes she did not. It was no business of mine, but I could not help trying to connect the arrival of a letter with the appearance of the ring. Was *Méli-*

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sande betrothed to some weak, foolish boy whom she was trying to reclaim? Was the engagement maintained during good behaviour? Did the eclipse of the ring register one more lapse? I made an imaginary picture of the young man in New York, tortured with remorse and writing his frantic appeals: "*I have been smoking again. Will you ever be able to forgive me? . . .*" And I could fancy the relentless thrust of Mélisande's determined little chin, as she answered: "*Since you seem to prefer your horrid cigars to me, I think we had both better recognize that our engagement has been a mistake.*" . . .

And then, I suppose, the boy would say that he had smoked his last cigar and that, without Mélisande, he would have no incentive to a decent life. For all her determined little chin, Mélisande was too young not to be gratified when the making and marring of a man's life was laid in her hands. She would forgive him and wear his ring again.

I wondered how this strangely unstable relationship would end. Mélisande was shortly returning to America; and I should not be there to see. On her last night in the hotel I fell by chance into conversation with one of her friends; and, when she joined us, I was honoured with an eleventh-hour introduction.

"I'm crazy to stay on here," Mélisande told me.

"You've enjoyed yourself?", I asked.

"I surely have!"

"And you're homesick?"

"Why, no! Mother and dad and Felicia and Mr. Bayle — that's my brother-in-law — are right here.

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That's the whole bunch, except Gran; and I've heard from her every mail."

At this point the young man who had introduced me opined archly that *Mélisande* would perhaps feel homesick when she was back in Albany and lost to all her friends of the south.

"Oh, boy!", said *Mélisande* pityingly.

Then, brightening, she told me of all the work she hoped to do in the coming months. Literature was the jealous goddess whom she worshipped; magazine-stories were her votive offerings. Though they had not hitherto been accepted, she gave me to understand that a time would come: the *Saturday Evening Post*, in her dreams, would one day ask her to name her own terms.

"I shan't ever marry," she announced.

"But," I said, "you are wearing an engagement-ring."

Mélisande looked down at her left hand.

"Gran gave me that," she answered.

"You always wear it on the third finger?"

"That's the only one it fits . . . Say, listen! Do girls in England write stories for magazines?"

"Some do," I answered.

And then I told her of one saintly woman who set herself to reclaim a weak, foolish boy who was killing himself with his excesses. She, I said, was a writer of magazine-stories; and her life was a struggle between the duty which she owed to her art and the duty which she owed to humanity. The same mail brought her a proposal of marriage from the weak foolish boy and an incredible offer — I could hardly believe it myself — from the editor of a well-known English review.

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"Why didn't she take both?", asked Mélisande.

"The boy was not fit for her . . . *then*," I answered; "but she consented to an engagement. If he would give up smoking and drinking, she would marry him; but the moment he went back to his bad ways she would pull his ring off her finger and send it back to him. I need hardly tell you that a man of that kind can't pull himself together in a moment. There were frequent backslidings; but the girl was very patient, very forgiving. In the end . . . "

I have forgotten what happened in the end. It was not much of a story; but I think it was slightly less dull than Mélisande's own.

NASSAU. 19 FEBRUARY, 1923.

I went sailing to-day to one of the few inhabited islands in the neighbourhood of New Providence. I must withhold its name, as I want to acquire it and cannot afford to bring unnecessary competitors into the market. I want it for my honeymoon; and that is why it is here called

HONEYMOON CAY*

From a distance you can see no landing. The island is long and narrow; at the south end it stands high out of the sea, and the surf booms against a white line of forbidding cliffs. The north end tails to a point so narrow that from the lee side you can watch the spray being flung high above the sea-grapes and palms; but

* Pronounced "Key". A small island.

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here again there is nowhere to beach a boat. There are sandy coves on the ocean side; but the prevailing wind is from the open sea, and you might lie off for many days before the water was calm enough for you to steer through the reefs.

As you come in closer, you will indeed sight a landing-stage on the side of the cliffs; but the steps by which you approach it can be hauled in like a draw-bridge. It is only when you know the island that you make for the lagoon; and this you have to reach through a gash in the cliff barely wide enough to let your boat through without scraping. The anchorage is calm as a lily-pond; but, as you look back through the cleft to the waves outside, you realize that your navigator had a practised hand to bring you in without mishap. This is as it should be, for the approach to Honeymoon Cay should not be made too easy.

On landing, you climb a flagged path between two lines of palm-trees; and, before you have guessed that there is a house on the island, you are standing on the verandah that runs round three sides of it. When the wind blows from the open sea, you sit on the side of the lagoon; when it blows from the lagoon, you sit facing the open sea. There is a bathing-beach on either shore; and you move from side to side and from end to end of this two-mile-long sea-paradise between hedges of olive green sea-grapes.

The island is not at present for sale; it is hardly conceivable that any one would be foolish enough to sell it; and yet no one has the moral right to own it in perpetuity. It has a purpose; and—that purpose once ful-

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filled — it should pass to other hands. It is the one place in all the world for a honeymoon.

You must know nothing of it before you come there. One night you will embark by the light of an orange moon, gliding noiselessly through a forest of slender black masts and spars. Over the lapping of tiny waves will float a whisper "God speed you and bless you". And then at last you will be alone. As the orange moon climbs the sky and cools to silver, you will see the dark hump of Honeymoon Cay. You will not think to look for the lagoon, but the cliffs will open to receive you. Up the white flagged path, in the black shade of the palm-trees you will walk hand in hand to the welcome of the broad verandah.

The loveliness of the night will become a part of you and a part of your life. You may marry where you please; here you "live happily ever afterwards".

Perhaps that is why Honeymoon Cay is not for sale.

NASSAU. 20 FEBRUARY, 1923.

I promised to tell you of the glass-bottomed boats that ply between Nassau and the Sea Gardens at the east end of Hog Island. If the Hanging Gardens of Babylon were one of the ancient seven, the Sea Gardens of Nassau are

THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD

Always remember that there is no water in the world to match the varied beauty of the sea round New Providence. It is so clear that you can look through it for

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an incredible distance; the sand consists of powdered white coral; and the varying colours of the sky are reflected, intensified and changed till you have more shades than there are words to describe. Turquoise blue predominates; but you will find royal blue, sapphire blue, cornflower blue, electric blue and butterfly's wing. Among the greens, emerald predominates; but you will also find bottle-green, olive green, sage green. There are amethysts and purples and lavenders. Sometimes the colours are sharply divided, as a field of young wheat is divided from a field of beans; sometimes they are mingled like paints on a palette. And always they are changing as you watch them. A cloud almost too faint to be seen dims the brilliance of the sun; and at once, as though a vast invisible brush were sweeping the surface of the water, green turns to blue and blue to violet.

As you sail from island to island, you will notice sable stains on the white sand. This may be a flat table of rock; it may be a clump of weed: the ripple of the water makes it hard for you to determine. That is why you must visit the Sea Gardens in a glass-bottomed boat. Seen through a great green microscope, the water seems to have no movement; and the silence equals the stillness. You are like a god looking down on a world of your own creation; on an endless series of worlds, rather, for the glass and the water make a lens, and, as you drift to and fro, you seem to be gazing into one valley after another, with enchanted sides that sink and melt as you approach them.

Through your coloured lens, the sand no longer seems

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white; and you approach the gardens through a wide expanse of rolling grass-land. There are such isolated trees and coppices as you would find in an English park; but the dense, orderly vegetation does not begin till you enter the gardens themselves. There you will find smooth lawns sheltered by thick plantations of evergreens and divided, one from another, by the white cairns of a submarine rock-garden. Every fern that you have seen on land is reinforced by every fern that you have imagined in a dream. The shrubs are swaying in a perpetual breeze; and the illusion of stillness vanishes when you realize that they are straining to keep their top-heavy bulk erect against an invisible current. Outside the gardens there lies a belt of primeval forest; the huge jelly-bags on the tree-tops are sponges, awaiting the time when they shall be cut loose and brought ashore to have their jelly rotted away. And beyond the forest-belt lie more rock-gardens, more lawns and another forest-belt.

It seems too perfect for unaided nature; but, in the sea-gardens, wherever man has interfered, he has only spoiled; and the gardens have to be protected from his ravages. Now they are safe; and their inhabitants may rest and play in peace.

You may guess the strength of that current when you watch a school of tiny grey-black fishes whipping and tacking against it like a school of tiny children battling against a hurricane. The lumbering shell-fish that sidle by nature sidle more awkwardly as they leave the protection of their honeycombed cairns and venture into mid-stream. It is no place for the young and infirm.

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For the rest, it is all in the day's work; and, if "life" be "perfect adjustment to environment", the life of the sea-gardens must be life divine for the myriad fishes that you see there. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these blue or purple, these yellow-and-black, these grey or pink creatures. Whence and why do such colours come?

Were you a fisherman, you might shrink from cutting short a life and devastating such a home; but, if you restrain your hand, a menace more deadly and more sure remains. The little fishes feed the bigger fishes; and the bigger fishes feed the sharks: that is the single, clumsy law that nature has contrived for the maintenance of the species. The nearer you come to nature, the nearer you approach a state of perpetual war.

When you leave the Sea Gardens, you exchange your glass-bottomed boat for a launch manned by negroes from West Africa. Their ancestors were enslaved by yours for the maintenance of the human species. Now they are free; the state of war has been suspended; and no one knows whether their sons, in a climate natural to them, will not enslave yours. . . .

It is a mistake, however, to see anything in the sea-gardens beyond their undesigned natural beauty.

NASSAU. 21 FEBRUARY, 1923.

I told you that in two days you could see all that was to be seen in New Providence. In the ten days that I have been here I have seen something of the bathing, the sailing and the fishing, the turtle-feasts and chowdah-

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parties; I have motored all over the island; have studied — superficially at least — the history of Nassau in relation to piracy and blockade-running and bootlegging. Now I am trying to get my impressions in order.

THE LURE OF THE ISLANDS

The Bahamas are holiday islands. In escaping from northern winter, you escape from northern bustle; and the Americans, who work and play with equal absorption, have organized the life of New Providence on holiday lines. Between January and April you may sail and picnic and motor and swim; but you must not try to work.

They are islands of inexhaustible beauty; and, if I do not say more of the sunsets and sunrises, the nights and mornings, the moons and stars, the flowers and trees, it is because I am afraid of wearying you. They are also islands of hospitality immeasurable, like all that I have visited in my beloved West Indies. And they have a lure of their own. While I have been here, I have been meeting, day after day, Canadians and Americans who come here every year; some have built houses, others are building, others again are hardy perennials of the hotels; over all, the Bahamas have cast their spell. You would find more distractions in Cuba and a more tropical setting in Jamaica; neither would make the peculiar appeal of Nassau. Who shall say wherein it lies?

By comparison with the coloured folk, the white inhabitants of the Bahamas are numerically negligible;

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face to face with the American visitors, the British residents are overwhelmed. New Providence depends for most of its steamship service on American lines; the two principal hotels are controlled by the Florida East Coast Company; and the American language and reckoning are so freely employed that the Royal Victoria and the New Colonial display notices ordaining that accounts are to be settled in United States currency. (As both hotels command a view of the Government House flag-staff, it is to be hoped that the law governing this notice is more sound than its taste; if a British place of business on American soil displayed notices ordaining that accounts were to be settled in sterling, the criticism of the American press and people would be instructive reading).

Living in a permanent minority, the white British population is thrown back on itself. This does not mean that it is antagonistic to, or aloof from, the American visitors; but, as the short American season begins after Christmas and ends before Easter, the white British residents, like a British colony in a foreign country, have to make the most of one another for the rest of the year. There is no room for feuds or proscriptions; they work together and play together; and they get more out of their brief portion than their jaded contemporaries in England.

It is colonial life at its best. Apart from the few who have chosen Nassau for ending their days in retirement, every one is working; and work here brings men and women to an equality instead of setting one above another as in England, where the dockyard people of upper

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rank refuse to know the dockyard people of lower rank, the dockyard people of lower rank refuse to know the small gentry, the small gentry refuses to know the tradespeople, and the commissioner refuses to know anybody. When they have worked together, they play together; and, as they depend for amusement on their own exertions, they have made an art of hospitality. You may dine at the Royal Victoria, you may dance at the New Colonial; after that you must fend for yourself. And, as every one tries to live out of doors for the greater part of the day and night, as it is more amusing to fend for yourself in company than alone, the white British residents shew a fellowship and zest for which England has no parallel. The visitor who has the good fortune to be accepted finds himself a unit of the most care-free stage-army in the world.

And a visitor has only himself to blame if he is not accepted. Nassau is untiring in its welcome; it seems to ask nothing more than the chance of forging one more link with England. Under the gaiety, in spite of the freedom, there is a hint of wistfulness: New Providence, by the quickest route, is ten days from the heart of empire; sometimes, to Nassau, the journey seems longer and the Bahamas seem almost to have been forgotten.

A working test of a place and its people is the time that a stranger requires to assimilate the daily life. It is also a test of the stranger; but in Nassau his adaptability is not strained. Within twenty-four hours he has learned the ways and speech of the island; within forty-eight he can pass himself off as a "conch" or "Nassau shell-back". Then he is at home.

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And, with it all, the Bahamas are less known to English people than almost any habitable part of the British Empire. Since they do not know what they have missed, the English are hardly to be pitied; but they are missing the first holiday-islands in the world. Any one who lives elsewhere when he could live on an island is unworthy of the Bahamas and not wanted there.

NASSAU. 22 FEBRUARY, 1923.

To-day is the anniversary of George Washington's birth. In his honour, the American colony has for days past been arranging dinner-parties great and small, to be followed by a night of merry-making. Badges and coloured bows have been distributed; and on a hundred coats may be seen cardboard axes to commemorate young George's exploit with the cherry-tree.

The British, who have already erected in London a statue to the man who led the American revolution, participate in these celebrations without resentment. Those Americans who cherish bitter feeling against George III sometimes forget that, whereas they shook off his yoke in 1776, the English suffered under it for nearly forty years more; and, when at last the old king died, he left sons to succeed him. Yet there is no ill-will towards the memory of the king or of Lord North; and the name of Washington is held in admiration and envy.

If his birthday arouses little enthusiasm among the English that is because they are suspicious of

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ANNIVERSARIES

The French are superb at this sort of thing. The names of their streets keep green the memory of their mighty dead. Their squares and avenues and bridges commemorate five centuries of glorious bloodshed. The right place on the right day never fails to charm forth a specimen of the right patriotic oratory. There is no people to equal them, least of all the English who gave the name of Waterloo to a railway-station because they could think of nothing else to call it.

On the anniversary of Trafalgar certain pious hands deck the Nelson column with dreary green, but no one minds; and Charles the First takes tribute of those who think of him as a martyr, but no one makes a speech about it. The Napoleonic wars are over; and so is the Great Rebellion. Every man is free to remember them if he must and to forget them if he can; nobody is entitled to make a demonstration.

If once the practice creeps in, it will not easily be stopped. England has cradled so many sailors and soldiers, so many statesmen and philosophers, so many poets and novelists, so many scientists and historians. They all had their days of birth and of death. There could be a celebration for every hour of the year; but what other good than to confront the world with its own ignorance would it possibly do? Anniversaries are for newspapers. To draw the reader's attention to the date of Samuel Richardson's birth is legitimate enough: a leading article on the gifted author of *Pamela*, which can be kept standing in type, fills a difficult space; and

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it is the fault of the reader if he allow his attention to be drawn by it. Imagination boggles at the thought of a Richardson dinner, followed by speeches on Richardson and readings from his copious works. Dead novelists tell no tales; and harassed readers, who already have quite enough trouble with the books of their friends, need not pretend to be acquainted with a man's works when he is safely in his grave.

“There is a great deal to be said
For being dead.”

Anniversaries, however, rob death of half its value.

Consider this preposterous Richardson! As he lived somewhat less than five-score years, the centenary of his birth and death can be celebrated once a century. Dozens of journalists in dozens of newspaper-offices will consult their calendars and turn back through dusty files to a faded article beginning: *One hundred years ago Samuel Richardson, sometimes called ‘the father of the English novel’ and, less contentiously, admitted to be the creator of the epistolary style in novel-writing, was born in Derbyshire.* Dozens of pens scratch out the first word and substitute “two” for “one”; the article is then despatched to the composing-room.

Next day, England awakes to realize that another of her great neglected dead is celebrating a birthday. Barabbas and Company, the well-known publishers, intervene in the nick of time to keep their last sets from being remaindered and announce them as a new and complete edition of Richardson's novels. The Fielding Society, ventilating an ancient feud in the columns of *The*

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Times, comments scornfully on the power of a name, which may be repeated uncomprehendingly by generations that are too wise to read the nonsense associated with it. "Fairplay", replying to the Fielding Society, repudiates indignantly the charge of literary snobbishness and asserts that the readers and lovers of Richardson are more numerous than the Fielding Society imagines. A Richardson Club is, in fact, being formed; and the date of the first dinner will be announced with all convenient speed.

The chair, at this first dinner, is taken by Sir Hamlyn Hamlyn, the well-known novelist, who reminds his audience that to-day marks the hundred-and-twentieth anniversary of the Master's death. *Richardson, as every one knows, was born in Derbyshire. . . .* And the reporters, on a whisper that the speech has been lifted from the *Dictionary of National Biography*, lay down their pencils. Young George Barabbas, whose ancestor founded the firm and was Richardson's first publisher, tells the subsequent history of the firm in detail; and the reporters note that Mr. G. Barabbas also contributed a few remarks. Then Mr. Richardson-Pike, a reputed lateral descendant of the great man, proposes the chairman's health; and the reporters, who have received an advance copy of Sir Hamlyn's reply, leave dejectedly for their offices. The Richardson Club then slumbers till the next anniversary.

Multiply the preposterous Richardson by all the George Herberts, the Tillotsons, the Robertsons, the Youngs and Thomsons who, each in his generation, swell the army of the Standard Unread; give to all two days

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in every year for the anniversary of death and birth; the calendar will be crowded! And no one but Barabbas and Company will be one penny the better. But for a Richardson Club, curious scholars might read Richardson; by joining the club they are presumed to have read him; and that is their reason for joining.

That and an inexplicable, wholly English desire for bad public dinners and worse public speeches. Deeply though they detest patriotic displays and easily though they are bored by the splendid chapters of their rough island story, the English will swallow anniversaries whole and in public if they have a chairman, a guest of the evening, a toast-master and some halting speeches. So be it! If there are to be dinners, if there must be anniversaries, let them be for the benefit of the living. The social columns of the daily press record the birthdays of certain peers and ministers; but an author must die before any one enquires when he was born. And sometimes he needs a dinner more urgently than any of those who drink to the immortal memory of Samuel Richardson. If those journalists would turn from their calendars to the last issue of *Who's Who*, from the neglected dead to the neglected living!

Dinners

The Pennefather Club

The first annual dinner of the Pennefather Club was held last night at the Connaugh Rooms, with Mr. George Barabbas in the chair. The occasion was the twenty-third anniversary of Mr. Emanuel Pennefather's birth; and the chairman, whose firm had the honour of pub-

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lishing the young author's famous novel (Sins and Sorrowings. Barabbas and Company 7/-net) said that nothing gave him greater pleasure than to announce that the book was in its third hundred. Mr. Pennefather, who was warmly cheered on rising, described his novel and the circumstances in which it was written. . . .

Under such a system, Barabbas and Company benefit by increased sales. Mr. Pennefather, unless he has sold his book outright, may receive a royalty; and his friends, who have heard him describe his book, are now under no obligation to read it. Has this idea occurred to no one before?

NASSAU. 23 FEBRUARY, 1923.

Among the books that I brought away with me was a novel in which the hero was killed in action and buried with the colours of his regiment. The author temerari-ously named the regiment and unhappily chose one which enjoys the rare distinction of having no colours. This slip did not injure the novel by a fraction of one per cent. though I doubt not that half the officers named will write to draw the author's attention to his mistake; it was the only one that I, personally, noticed; and, since finding the exception, I have been meditating on the rule. Modern novelists, so far as I can judge, maintain a very high standard of accuracy.

Having committed myself to that, I know that I can be confronted with a long list of blunders. A., one of the greatest living playwrights and novelists, ended a first act with elaborate preparations — entrusted, rather

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inconsiderately, at midnight to a keeper who had to conjure beaters from the vasty deep — for shooting the home coverts at 10.0 a. m.; and at 10.0 a. m. the house party, forgetting its arrangements and neglecting its opportunities, assembled in pink for a day's hunting. I shall be challenged to defend the memory of B., who celebrated the return of a prodigal by instructing a butler to put the port on ice. Stevenson, in The Master of Ballantrae, plunged rapiers to their hilts in frozen earth. Ouida, I am told, made the same horse win the Derby in two succeeding years; and one resourceful author created a no less resourceful winner for the Leger and the Waterloo Cup. These things can be found, though more infrequently than before; and they do not shake my faith in

THE ACCURACY OF MODERN NOVELISTS

If the purpose of a novel be to create an illusion of life, the novelist bares his breast to the shafts of every man, woman and child who may chance to read his book. How can a young man know the philosophy of age, an old the impetuosity of youth? How can women or men divine more than men or women choose to shew them? Is not the novelist, who presumes to write of male and female, young and old, aping the omniscience of God?

On the highest plane of psychology there can be no final judgment. Madame Bovary was created by a man; and the world has not yet determined whether she is a portrait or a caricature. No woman has painted a similar picture of a man: is that by accident or through inability? Men and women, even the frankest, have

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never told the opposite, the ever-opposing sex, how nearly it has approached truth; and the critics who speak of a novelist's accuracy recognize this. With his fundamental understanding and fidelity they do not, cannot concern themselves; but every one can assert that Madame Bovary dressed in the fashion of a generation before her own and used the colloquialisms of a generation after it. On the plane of realistic accuracy, there is summary jurisdiction.

It is amazing that your novelist consents to tread a road that is set with pitfalls literally from the cradle, literally to the grave. Men will describe a confinement in technical language without having been present at one; they will depict a funeral without having heard the rare jargon of the mutes; and between these extremes of life they will dress and bedizen women in fashions that change more quickly than a chameleon's colour. The characters in every novel live by bread, which must be bought with money; they live in a country governed by laws, which are increased and modified by a legislature; they work at any one of a thousand tasks, they amuse themselves in any one of a hundred ways; they alternate between sickness and health. In a short phrase, the average men and women of an average novel lead average lives.

And the average novelist finds himself pitted on every page against a specialist. That money which buys the bread: your novelist, before he has been long at work, must know the various incomes that are needed for various styles of living; he must be ready to buy and sell without violating the terminology of finance. If his

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broker abscond, he must create a solicitor to catch him; and the solicitor must act and speak in a way that no lawyer can challenge. Should the defaulter be brought up for trial, your novelist must walk warily into a court where every barrister's clerk can set him right; should the law prove itself "hass", it must be changed according to a procedure which is better known to the charwomen of the House of Commons than to the groping novelist. And, should he or his characters snap under such nervous strain, he must make his physicians and surgeons unassailable by their own faculty.

Is accuracy, so highly tempered, necessary when little depends on it? It is "the quality of mercy" that we need; and surely none but a pedant would ask whether Portia had eaten her dinners or been admitted to plead. If Bohemia may have a seaboard, anything is permissible: Treasury clerks, as in one recent novel, may be paid quarterly, and, as in one less recent, how may lean forward to whisper encouragement into the ear of stroke.

Accuracy matters to this extent; to this extent it is indispensable. The novelist is cruelly presented with a bubble of omniscience; and, once pricked, it is pricked for ever. Let him mangle a legal or financial term; and the confidence of the Temple and of the City is forfeit. Let him trip over a school phrase, a university custom or a regimental tradition; the whole is damned for the part. If any one hesitate to believe this, let him try the experiment of setting a House man on the tow-path to shout "Well rowed, Christ Church"; let him call the Coldstream Guards "the Coldstreams"; let him tread the scented and flowered path of Ouida. If he is re-

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membered at all, he will be remembered — like her — for epic and wholly irrelevant blunders, while the book in which they might have passed unnoticed are forgotten. It is natural enough to change from believing everything to believing nothing; and it is not unpleasant to instruct the man who is instructing you. Letter will rain down, signed and unsigned, gracious and spiteful, when an error is suspected; and the novelist is urged to greater accuracy by critics who do not always wait to verify their own criticism.

This demand for infallibility is of recent growth, corresponding in time to the pre-Raphaelite movement towards accuracy in the detail of literature. If the great Victorians escaped it, that was because they lived before the realistic school. In England, no ten writers have set a higher standard of accuracy or a higher demand for it than Kipling, with his intuitive grasp and microscopic knowledge. Praised in frenzy and abused with fury, Kipling has influenced the method and exalted the aim of every writer who has come after him; and, if no one can hope to equal his range, all can aspire to maintain his level in their own fields. Day by day, the novel is becoming a more finished work of art. The carelessness of Sir Walter Scott, condoned by the lordliness of his genius, would not have been pardoned by the Victorian novelists whose own want of style shocked their critical successors. Accuracy of detail is the bequest which the late-Victorian and Edwardian novelists made to the English novel; and it is a bequest which the Georgian novelist cannot renounce if he would. To the criticism that a novelist is blundering, that he is pretending

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to know more than he does and that he has no business to write about what he does not understand, it is difficult to frame a defence.

As novelists are human, as it is human to err, a mistake may be pardoned, but it can never be excused. Novelists may congratulate themselves that, in the work of those who have established any claim to be considered seriously, there is so little to pardon. When a book of three- or four-hundred pages comes to be scrutinized by a stockbroker, a lawyer, a politician, a surgeon, a clergyman, a wine-merchant, a bookmaker, a chauffeur, a labour-leader, a journalist, a dressmaker, a soldier, an actress, a jeweller and a professional critic, the novelist may feel fortunate if he leaves the dock without a stain on his character and proud if he can enter it without a prick from his conscience.

NASSAU. 24 FEBRUARY, 1923.

Sitting here on a wide wooden verandah, looking over an avenue of royal-palms to the distant sea, I have been wondering wherein lies the peculiar placid enchantment of this place. I have met climates and scenery as beautiful in other parts of the world; I have known the same sense of well-being and idle contentment. I am not sure, though, that I have experienced such a feeling of security. There is a telephone in the hall, but none in my bedroom; and I am so tired of descending and ascending those six flights of stairs that I have come here, where no bell-boy will think to look for me. Nothing that any one can wish to tell me is too private to be given as a

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message; no question that any one has the right to ask me is so urgent that it cannot wait till I send a message in reply. The man who installs a telephone gives a hostage to fortune and a perpetual mortgage on his time; this he probably contemplated before he installed it; but of late a new terror, which he could not have foreseen, has been added. In the last month or so before I left England, I was invited by fully six newspapers to give, without previous warning or thought, my opinion on six subjects that happened to be exercising the mind of the public. When the Calcutta Sweepstake was won by a typist in Liverpool, one enterprising journalist collected the experiences of his victims on such sweepstakes as they might have won, with any anecdotes of the turf that they might care to add. After one hotly discussed murder-trial, another journalist telephoned to a number of novelists and playwrights to ascertain their views on capital punishment; and a third was so hard-pressed for copy that he demanded an answer to the question: "What is the most beautiful sight in the world? The president of the —— Society stated in a speech last night that the most beautiful sight in the world was a yacht under full sail. Do you agree? If not, what would you suggest instead?"

This nuisance has grown, is growing and ought to be stopped. The journalist with more space than ideas feels at liberty to interrupt any one at any hour of the day in order to fill a column with garbled opinions that are not worth the paper on which they are printed. Who can detach his mind from perhaps engrossing work to say what, in his opinion, is the most beautiful sight in

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*the world? And who would give a fig for his opinion?
Who, for that matter, gives a fig at any time for*

OTHER PEOPLE'S OPINIONS?

"I like to form my own opinion of a play before the critics have had time to write about it."

At any theatre, on any first night, this defence is offered with an air of originality, if not with an effect of conviction. It is idle to point out that no one is obliged to read what the critics write or that the play will better repay a considered judgment when it has run for a week. First-nights, for a reason unknown to those who have to attend them, are *modish*. The papers chronicle next day that, among those present at the Bacchanalia Theatre for the opening night of Mr. Toots' *Eleventh-Hour Repentance* were Sir George and Lady Sparks, Mr. Brent and Lord Glastonbury; on the day following they add apologetically: "The names of Lady Glastonbury, Mr. Sparks and Sir George and Lady Brent should have been included in the list of those who were present at the opening night of Mr. Toots' *Eleventh-Hour Repentance*." Ask Mr. Brent whether he has seen the new Toots play; and he will answer "Yes, I was there the first night." He knows and you know (or you very soon will) that not every one can get seats for a first-night; you have to be on terms of privileged intimacy with actors and managers and the high gods who preside over box-offices. A first-night audience is unlike all others, if only in its self-consciousness and in its ingenuousness. Mr. Brent is far less interested in the play than in his friends. "Ah, there's Jack!", you will hear him say.

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“And Mildred. Satterthwaite seems rather bored,” he will add, as a well-known critic yawns unguardedly. “Shall we go round and congratulate Millicent?”, he asks at the end. By sight at least he knows every one, does Brent; he enjoys himself consumedly; he comes to every first-night; and, quite carelessly, he lets this be known to all his friends.

For fear you should think he was boasting, for fear — still worse! — that he should seem too much impressed, he adds, defensively, that he likes to form his own opinion of a play before the critics have had time to write about it. For the opinion of a critic he would not give a fig, though you will find him canvassing his friends in the intervals. “Well, what d’ you think of it?”, is a question he asks of every one that he can buttonhole. If any one suggests that the play would be improved by cutting, he agrees (most plays would be improved by cutting on the first night); but you will not persuade him to wait for a week till the play has been cut and trimmed for the run.

He does not care a fig for the opinions of reviewers. Mr. Toots once wrote a novel that he rather liked; and, though the next book was attacked, he had to read it for himself. It was not so good as the first; but he read the third just to see if it was better than the second. By treating a reviewer’s opinion as superfluous, he has done much to make it worthless. With half-a-dozen exceptions, the literary criticism of English daily and weekly papers cannot be seriously regarded as either criticism or literature. It is ill-paid and ill-done. Under pressure from the publishers, most papers try to “notice” every new

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book; and, in the comforting belief that what is written for the day perishes with the day, the hard-driven reviewer permits himself a degree of carelessness that would be criminal if any one treated newspaper criticism as more than a guide to circulating libraries. An author has difficulty in recognizing his own book by the time that the names have been misspelt and a new middle or end supplied by guess-work; but, if he is concerned for his sales, he must be grateful to be reviewed at all. Undiscriminating praise cannot save a bad book; indiscriminating abuse cannot kill a good one. The press may retard or advance a book's circulation; but it is the public that decides whether to read it. And this decision is based on the amount of discussion which a book receives; you may read *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* because everybody is talking about it; you may refuse to read it because you are so tired of hearing everybody talking about it.

And, whether he reads it or not, Mr. Brent does at least make up his mind for himself; he does not let the critics dictate to him; though he may not say so, other people's opinions—especially about books and plays and art and all that sort of thing—are not always to be trusted. He would be rather indignant, though, if he were told that his independent, considered judgments were not his nor his neighbour's nor the reviewer's, but a part of the herd-suggestion which he despises so much when he sees other people yielding to it. Every year or two the world seems to go mad over some book and then to revenge itself upon the innocent author by a mad revulsion of feeling. That is the herd way. *If*

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Winter Comes won such praise that there seemed no possibility of a blemish in it; *This Freedom* excited so much ridicule that the merits of the book were overlooked. Once an idolater has turned against his god, he must needs deny with cursing and swearing that he ever worshipped him: *If Winter Comes*, after a public enquiry into the reasons of its popularity, is now being mocked with as little discrimination as it was once praised.

There is nothing new in this; and there is no sadder page in the history of literature than that which records the monarchs who have been dethroned. Who, under forty, has read *The Case of Sir Richard Calmedy*? Who, under sixty, has read it twice? How many, of any age, remember the author's name? *Called Back* is a key that unlocks no doors of youthful memory; its savour is lost, its magic dead; and its author's name is mumbled only by toothless gums. The generation that went mad over these books now turns from the recollection of its madness as from a drunken debauch.

And that simile suggests an explanation. When the world bows under the pressure of herd-hynotism, the individual is no more accountable for his actions than is a man whose will has been sapped by drink or drugs. He blames and praises without thought, shouting with the majority; and Philip sober revokes the wild words of Philip drunk. In either state, however, he will tell you that he is acting on his own initiative, thinking for himself and forming his own opinion before the critics try to influence him. The bubble of popularity is ever pricked by him who blows it.

And the critics? Are they immune from this herd-

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hypnotism? Can they recognize the absolute and isolate the quintessential? If your opinion to-day should prove to be the opinion of the ages, you would not refuse to take it ready-made. *Haec placuit semel, haec decies repetita placebit*: in art, there is no other criterion of excellence. If the critics, who can stride up and down the centuries, tell you that this or that is in the great tradition, you would not stand out stubbornly for your private judgment?

Not if the critics are to be trusted, you answer; and are they? Next to the list of dethroned kings, the saddest page in the history of literature is that which enumerates their disgraced ministers. If you turn to the critical reviews of fifty and sixty years ago, you will find little difference between them and their successors: if there is a change in the phrasing, there is none in the air of magisterial authority. The sheep are divided, as rigorously as ever, from the goats; St. Peter's keys were gripped as firmly then as now; and what they loosed or bound in their generation was loosed or bound for eternity. About that you should make no mistake.

They make strange reading, these old reviews. A score or two of the books that were published in the 'seventies and 'eighties have survived to the nineteen-twenties: did the critics of that time discover them? Did they lay their gold and frankincense and myrrh before Hardy and Meredith and Swinburne? Thousands of the books that were acclaimed in those days are now dead and forgotten: did the critics ever acclaim them in error and prophesy immortality? Did Carlyle and Acton ever speak of George Eliot in terms of greater adulation than

American reviewers have used of Ibañez? Turn to the old files, and you will see. Almost you will be persuaded that critics have a herd-hypnotism of their own.

There would, said Andrew Lang, be less controversy about the right method of translating Homer, if scholars would recognize that there could be no final method. Fashions change; and, during their reign, they press equally on the critics and on those who like to form their own opinions before the critics. Every opinion, so it be honest, is as sound and durable as every other opinion. That is why we feel instinctively that other people's opinions are worthless.

NASSAU. 25 FEBRUARY, 1923.

I have a mischief-loving friend, with a taste for first principles, who delights in making his juniors justify their existence. The word in all his vocabulary most mercilessly overworked is "Why?"; and, when he discharges this at his victim for every act of free choice that the victim has committed, an answer is not always forthcoming. "You are a dramatist?", the catechism runs; "why? Because you hope for fame? Because you wish money? Because a flame inside you has to be fed? Why? Why? Why? You aspire, before you die, to create one or two characters who shall be as real to your readers as your wife and mother are to you. Good. You wish to paint the manners of your time in such a way that posterity will abandon its text-books for your plays very much as you abandoned your text-books for Tom Jones and Vanity Fair. Good. But why?" . . .

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The catechism is exasperating, but it is useful. I sometimes wish that my friend would carry his search for first principles to a few critics, for it is more than time for us to have a clear statement of

THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM

A critic and a reviewer have no more in common than a demonstrator in anatomy and a photographer. To shew potential readers what a book is like, the reviewer takes a snapshot of it and adds, if he likes, a word or two of explanation. The camera may be set crooked; the photographer may be inexpert. So long, however, as a reader can decipher the letter-press: *This is the book I am reviewing. This is the publisher's name. Here is the price,* the reviewer may be thought to have earned his fee.

A critic is a judge. He hears cases argued and precedents cited; he finds a verdict. Sometimes the summing-up will be concerned wholly with the subject-matter of the case; sometimes he will use the case as an excuse for examining the litigant's previous record. He is apprehensive for the dignity of his office and sensitive to the responsibility of his calling. Like every other judge, he is made cautious by the fear of having his judgments reversed on appeal; and, before he is qualified to sit, he must prove a normal knowledge of law and a more than normal knowledge of life. Further, before his elevation to the bench, he must swear to God and man that he will mete out equal justice, so far as in him lies, without fear or favour; and he must avow solemnly, calling God to witness, that he has devoted to the task

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of preparing himself for the bench as much time and energy and thought and sincerity as any or all of those who may plead before him.

The "irresponsible, indolent reviewers" whom Tennyson satirized hendecasyllabically are engaged by the proprietors and editors of newspapers (a) to satisfy publishers that they are getting a return for their outlay on advertisements, (b) to assist novel-readers in compiling a library-list and (c) to keep young journalistic aspirants out of mischief. With the aid of the brief eulogy which most publishers print on the jackets of their books and with the further aid of the common-form review which some publishers circulate to shew what they would like said, the reviewer is enabled to pad the news-cutting-album of the publisher and author and to recommend books which he has not read to the hungry public that requires three novels a week for fifty-two weeks in the year. The troublesome new comer to Fleet Street can usually be silenced with an armful of review-copies; and the publisher can quote the lines which he has himself inspired to prove, in later impressions, that *The Watchman* regards the book under consideration as "*a work of undeniable genius.*"

The critic cares no more than a judge of the High Court for advertisement-revenue or circulating-libraries or ephemeral fashions. His part is to appraise a work of art in terms that are themselves a work of art; and to use another man's book or picture as an excuse for displaying his own virtuosity is no more defensible than for a High Court judge to use a litigant's evidence as a peg for his own jocularity.

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For this reason, no man should ever sit as judge if he is likely to come into court as a litigant. Rhadamanthus himself could not be a just critic of novels if he were himself a novelist. One book, attempting a theme or method in which he had failed, would flaunt its exasperating success in his face; another would treat, in a way which he disliked, of a subject that bored him; a third would reveal the symptoms of that popularity which Rhadamanthus, though extolled by his friends as a genius of a higher order, could never achieve for his own books; a fourth would be from the hand of a dear comrade; and the author of the fifth might also be a critic before whose throne Rhadamanthus the novelist would one day tremble.

Authors are no less prone to temptation than the rest of mankind. If, as critics, they trample on the pettier forms of jealousy and eschew the more conspicuous modes of assassination, they can persuade themselves more easily than most that duty and interest are interlocked. It is a critic's duty to encourage promise, to expose the impostor and to exalt the artist; where the critic is a novelist on his own account, it is surprising how often an artist degenerates into an impostor from the moment when his success outstrips the critic's. In England, more than in any other country, authors attempt the impossible task of combining two irreconcilable parts; London is, in consequence, more than any other city, full of literary feuds and literary log-rolling.

If Rhadamanthus did succeed in putting his personal feelings on one side, the measure of his absorption in his

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own work would be the measure of his distaste for the methods and subject-matter of other novelists. The slum-school detests the schools that detest slums; and these other schools ask wearily whether the slum-school can ever tire of its dark courts and fetid alleys. Mr. Henry James would probably have been as unsympathetic a judge of Mr. Charles Garvice as Mr. Charles Garvice would have been of Mr. Henry James. Much, too much, of modern criticism consists of finding fault with a red book because it is not green. One of Thackeray's daughters asked him once why he did not write books like Mr. Dickens'; and Thackeray answered magnificently: "If only I could!" It would be delightful to write like Mr. Dickens; but, for purposes of their own, some people—notably Mr. Thackeray—have found Thackeray's medium more useful.

The perfect critic approaches a work of art without preconceptions, asking himself what the artist has tried to express, not whether it was worth expressing or desirable to express. He assays the difficulties of the method employed, without troubling to say whether he would have preferred a different method. Finally he passes judgment on the artist and his work by saying to what extent, in his opinion, the artist has achieved his aim. In *The Ambassadors* Henry James took a subject that interested him and treated it in the manner that he thought would be most illuminating. It was a stupendously difficult manner: but he chose to use it; and the perfect critic's one duty is to say whether he used it successfully. It is irrelevant to ask whether matter or manner was worth while.

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Perfect critics are rare; but they are less rare than reviewers. There are no reviewers; they are all critics.

NASSAU. 26 FEBRUARY, 1923.

Shortly before I left England, I heard a discussion of the eternal question whether novelists should allow the same characters to appear and reappear in different books. It was contended by the one side that the novelist who does this must be assuming, somewhat arrogantly, that his readers feel an interest in his characters equal to his own and that they must be almost as well versed in the author's books as the author himself. To this it was objected that any book which requires to be explained by reference to another book has been ill-written. For the rest, though a novel gives only a moment or two in the lives of its characters, their creator knows them from childhood to old age; and, if he choose to paint them a second time, in a new setting or from a different angle, he is free to do what he likes with his own. In any scene from actual life, the same people recur year after year; in any world of imagination there may—should not one say “there must”?—be the same statesmen and financiers, the same soldiers and sailors, the same social leaders. Balzac brings his Baron Nucingen, his Lucien de Rubempré into novel after novel; the shadow of Sidonia's wealth hangs over as many of Disraeli's books as his genius illuminates; and nobody seems one penny the worse.

It is only when the younger generation adopts this practice that it is found to be objectionable. Mr. Gals-

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worthy, Mr. Wells, Mr. Compton Mackenzie, Mr. Arnold Bennett and Mr. Hugh Walpole have all prolonged the lives of certain characters from one book to another; and most of them have been criticized adversely for this. Well, every man must write his own books in his own way; and, if the public dislikes this or that method, it is not obliged to read them. For my own part, I love to meet old friends again; and, if I ever joined a movement in favour of 'one character, one book,' it would only be in the interests of the characters themselves, who are sometimes shamefully overworked. Can you not imagine a meeting of protest, organized to secure

AN EIGHT-HOURS' DAY FOR NOVELISTS' FAVOURITE CHARACTERS?

The chair would be taken by Mr. Evesham. Though he is a shadowy figure in *The New Machiavelli* and a transient embarrassed phantom in such later books as he adorns, he would be voted there in deference to his age and personal distinction. He is an earl and a Knight of the Garter since Mr. Wells first made use of him; and, when you see him fingering the lapels of his coat—the tall, bent figure dominating the room—you feel that no one can dispute his right to preside.

The meeting assembles piece-meal, like an army of hunger-marchers, each unit collecting under its own banner. The Kipling contingent, as its leader explains, will watch the proceedings without taking part. Mr. Kipling has not overworked any of them; but, if he had, they would not complain. His was ever the gospel of work and devotion to duty. They are servants of the public;

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their purpose in the scheme of things, expounded to them by their creator, is to amuse a world which has adored them since the hour of their birth. As they must inevitably occupy a good deal of space, they will take up their position at the back of the hall.

The banner flutters down the gangway over the heads of Ortheris, Learoyd and Mulvaney, Stalky and Strickland (of the Police), Zigler and Penfentenyou and the rest. The secretary reads the notice convening the meeting and recites the names of those who have promised him their support. Clayhanger and Hilda Lessways, making the most of their jaunt to London, turn curious eyes on their neighbours. They are intrigued and rather daunted by an immense family of Forsytes under a banner inscribed with the name 'Galsworthy'; it runs to four or five generations; and it is so aggressively prosperous. On the other side they see a group that, by the standard of the Five Towns, can hardly be considered respectable. It is the Compton Mackenzie contingent, headed — at the hand-gallop that has swept her round the world — by Sylvia Scarlett: Michael Fane is with her; and Guy Hazlewood; and Lily Haden; and Stella. They are all very young, very voluble, living on wires. One would not associate them with an eight-hours' day; and a whisper runs through the hall that they have come to break up the meeting. Sylvia at least is not so shy of limelight that she needs to have restrictions imposed on it.

Very quiet, by comparison, is the small group under the Walpole banner. After playing their part many, many years ago in *Fortitude*, one or two of them have

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“obliged” in *The Young Enchanted*; it is technically accurate to say that one or two more may have appeared both in *The Green Mirror* and *The Captives*, but it would be an abuse of language to call this work. Compare what they are asked to do with the burden imposed on Soames Forsyte or Michael Fane! And their office, in truth, is a sinecure by contrast with that of magazine favourites like the Scarlet Pimpernel and Captain Kettle and Arsène Lupin. For Sherlock Holmes there was no peace in death itself: his creator hauled him up from the bottom of that precipice into which he and Professor Moriarty had plunged in their last grapple; or, rather, he pretended that he had never pushed him over, and every one was so glad to see Holmes back in the old Baker Street rooms that no questions were asked.

Yes, Holmes and his like might well complain that they never have a moment to themselves; but this meeting of protest is developing unexpectedly, and it looks as if all complaints would be out of order. Mr. Evesham, with that love of dialectic which is so irritating sometimes to constructive statesmen who have an outline-world to reform and not much time to do it in, is asking questions and setting traps. This meeting of protest may be good or it may be bad (the speaker prefers to maintain a position of philosophic doubt); it will certainly be futile unless the protest is directed against those who are actually responsible for the state of things criticized. This is not like an ordinary collision between employers and employed; or, rather, it is like every collision of employers and employed: and it is necessary to see clearly who these employers are.

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Not the novelists, who are themselves employed by the public, but the public itself; as with all sweated labour, the culprits are not the producers but the consumers. . . .

Such a doctrine sounds dangerously like an incitement to class-war; but Mr. Evesham adroitly soothes and mystifies the audience with a dilemma. If the malcontents rise against their task-masters, they will be rising against their creators: the public which — as they allege — is threatening their very existence is the public which gives them their very existence. Without digressing into the metaphysics of “being” and “not-being”, he may remind them of the problem with which Alice was confronted: if she existed only in the Red King’s dream, what happened to her when the Red King woke up?

The question is pertinent; and absorbing. What *does* happen to the people of a book when the book comes to an end? Sometimes we are told, sometimes we can guess. Rudolf Rassendyll, for example, left *The Prisoner of Zenda* to put himself in strict training for the day when the Princess Flavia should require him and he should meet young Rupert of Hentzau for their last duel. Sometimes they are set to work by a new master: Sir Harry Johnston found employment for Mrs. Warren’s daughter and for a generation of the Dombeyes unimagined by Dickens; long before him, Jules Verne had borrowed from Poe the characters in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.

There is no law to prevent it; and, this being so, why does no one write a book that shall bring together all his favourite characters from all his favourite books?

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Mr. Jingle and Colonel Newcome and Becky Sharp and Elizabeth Bennet and Michael Finsbury and Dolly Mickleham and Miriam, of *The Brushwood Boy*, and Uncle Ponderevo, from *Tono-Bungay*? Some of them, unfortunately, have been killed, for the time being; but there are chapters in the lives of them all that have been withheld. What, for example, was the restless Alfred Jingle doing before he came into Mr. Pickwick's life? And what did he do when his benefactor set him on his feet again in Demerara? Mr. Pickwick, we are told, "never had occasion to regret his bounty to Mr. Jingle; for both that person and Job Trotter became, in time, worthy members of society, although they have always steadily objected to return to the scenes of their old haunts and temptations." One who has lately been to Demerara can testify on oath that there is no record of Jingle in Georgetown: no street bears his name; there is no portrait of him at the club. You might expect to be greeted at the quay with a familiar: "Capital place — Fine fellows — Great life — Very"; but you will be disappointed. Perhaps, after all, he really settled down to a steady life.

And perhaps, after all, it is safer for this reason to leave them all where their creators left them. It would be unbearable to find that young Newcome, when he first joined, was the prig of the mess, or that Lady Mickleham, when she had daughters of her own, became just such a dowager-dragon as her own mother-in-law, or that old Mr. Jingle, though admittedly one of the pillars of Demerara society, was the least little bit of a wet-blanket at any young men's party.

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It is not altogether unfair to assume that, when an author refuses to conjure up the figures of his dreams a second time, it is because he does not quite know what to do with them.

NASSAU. 27 FEBRUARY, 1923.

Sitting here on my verandah, I have an uninterrupted view from the quay to the hotel. A boat comes in twice a week from New York and thrice from Miami, so we have a quickly changing population; and you can amuse yourself endlessly by speculating who these new people are.

America has not established her types so rigidly as England. That "typical" barrister is in fact a landscape-gardener; that "typical" pugilist is a banker; and that unmistakable parson-on-holiday is the head of a big department-store in St. Louis.

Even in England our types are perhaps not quite so clearly differentiated as you might think from an uncritical study of our

STAGE-TYPES

"Heart-broken at my Patience's barbarity," explained Bunthorn;

"By the advice of my solicitor

"In aid — in aid of a deserving charity,

"I've put myself up to be raffled for."

And then Gilbert shews you the solicitor: frock-coat, tall-hat, *pince-nez*; mutton-chop whiskers and the iron-grey of experience and formality. You would instantly

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know him for what he is, even if the love-sick maidens and the heavy dragoons were not there to help you by singing at him and against one another "*Oh, heaven's blessing on his solicitor!*" and "*A hideous curse on his solicitor!*" True, he is not to be found in quite every office of Lincoln's Inn Fields; but he is to be found in every stage office that the programme places in Lincoln's Inn Fields. These aids to quick identification are invaluable in a theatre; in the market-place they are rather misleading. You think you know your American detective from gun to gun; and then you may travel half way across the States with him in the belief that he is an absent-minded entomologist. Perhaps this is not a fair instance: it may have been part of his diabolical cunning to make you think him an absent-minded entomologist; but consider the dreamy thinkers, the lank poets, the keen business-men whom you see—and recognize at once—on the stage: are they a guide to the thinkers and poets and business-men whom you meet in life? My first philosopher looked like a (stage) pirate; my first poet would have passed anywhere as a professional footballer. Not only are these stage-types misleading in externals: they distort our view of the underlying, essential man. I have met solicitors in four continents; but, when I try to reduce them to their lowest common denominator, I always come back to frock-coats and *pince-nez* and tall-hats with tape-tied papers.

By 'distort' I do not mean 'disfigure'. If you recollect the stage-type of novelist, you will see that the playwright is presenting you with an idealized concep-

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tion of what all novelists would be if they could; the audience carries away this presentation and spreads it about the world; if any novelist could only be told often enough how he lives and works, I believe he would try to realize the stage ideal. From all accounts he is a man to be envied.

His power of improvisation is amazing, especially to a novelist. Instead of brooding over his subject or sketching a tentative scenario, he "sits down at his desk" and "just writes", the only threat to his happiness being that his characters (whom he ponders no more than his theme or his construction) "must surely get out of hand sometimes." His brush-work is unfaltering and impeccable: he never retouches. "I suppose," you will hear, "you just write the thing out and send it to a publisher?" Well, that is certainly quicker than having your manuscript typed and then rewriting it and having the second and third and fourth drafts typed and changed and retyped. And, once your publisher takes charge, your troubles are over: no galley-proofs to correct, no page-proofs to recorrect; no occasion to wonder whether the English compositor is, on the whole, more knave than fool, the American more fool than knave.

The novelist, alone of those who eat their bread in the sweat of their face, is able (in popular belief) to work when and where he pleases. Having no papers to carry, no books to consult, he can choose where he will live; and, while the inventor gives himself up, body and soul, to endless experiments, the novelist need only scribble a few lines when "inspiration" comes to him. No

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study is required; no thought; no training; no self-discipline.

They are not required because the novelist is so singularly gifted. The sociologist, the historian and the administrator may spend a life-time in one corner of India without being able to boast at the end that they "know" India; but the novelist, hurrying from Bombay to Calcutta on his way farther east, has come there for "local colour"; he is going to write a novel about India; and, with his marvellous apprehension, he needs only a day or two with English friends in a hill-station in order to write convincingly of native life in the Deccan. A singular gift, but one that must be used constantly if it is not to rust; and the novelist uses it constantly. Should you meet him at Ascot, he is not there for the racing; he does not go to the Strangers' Gallery because he is interested in a debate. In both places — in all places and at all times! — he is pursuing his eternal quest for "copy."

If a man's life reacts on his character, this spoilt child of the arts should be a sunny, likable fellow to meet; and so he is. A rare conversationalist: he is that, too, because he understands everything about everything and because the man who writes with studied care on his own subject must be able to talk without premeditation on other people's. He is touchy on one point: you must talk to him, a certain amount, of his books, even if you have not read them, even if your opinion is worthless, even if you feel no similar compulsion to discuss theology with a clergyman or obstetrics with a gynæcologist. Once you have thrown him his sop, however, you can

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say what you like: if ever he had feelings to hurt, they have probably been dulled long since by the candour of professional critics; but, if you think you can do him any good by saying that you hated his last book, you should tell him so. You should tell him so if you think it will do *you* any good, for other men — on the stage and in the market-place — are not so patient of amateur criticism. On meeting a director of the White Star line for the first time, you would hardly open conversation by telling him that you hated that last ship of his; you might even decide that, if he wished to talk to you about his business, he could safely be left to begin.

If the essential, underlying man differ in certain respects from that idealized conception of the novelist which the public — to judge by its questions — prefers to entertain, the theatre must not be held wholly to blame. There is a stage-type of novelist, as there is a stage-type of solicitor, because the audience expects it and would hardly recognize any other representation; but here the public is imposing its will on the playwright. If you staged a literary dinner and made up the players in the likeness of our leading novelists, they might be mistaken for waiters, but they would never be taken for men of letters. They do not look nearly romantic enough.

And it is a convention in England, dating from the days when the arts were only followed by rogues and vagabonds, that authors and actors are unfailingly romantic. Handsome, dissolute and needy, they were no fit companions for English *bourgeois* sons, no fit husbands for English *bourgeois* daughters; in popular

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imaginative literature, the budding genius was always repudiated by his family, and, though his early privations were heart-breaking, you may feel that life in Bohemia was one degree less dreadful than life at home. It seemed less dreadful, certainly, to those who stayed at home; they made an image of picturesque clothes and starvation and long hair and candles stuck in bottles and reckless good-fellowship. Puccini wrote his most popular opera on this subject.

The portrait bears no resemblance to the original. The novelist of these latter days, I fancy, is only a shade less unromantic than the modern actress; and, if I were trying to make a new stage-type of actress, I should begin by emphasizing her respectability. With her love of sport, her domesticity and her interest in welfare-work, she is very different from the flaunting, extravagant quean who dominated the Victorian stage: English *bourgeois* daughters would feel rather unworthy of her; and she would not look at an English *bourgeois* son. You would never take her for an actress, least of all on the stage. There, a stage-type has gradually been built up from the days of Peg Woffington to those of Trelawney; and you would not be understood if you told the audience that, in life, there are individuals but no types.

NASSAU. 28 FEBRUARY, 1923.

Since I wrote to you yesterday, I have been thinking more of the way an audience imposes its preconceptions on a playwright. Novelists, I believe, with more time,

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more scope for explanation and less dependence on ocular demonstration, can state freely—and often convincingly—that So-and-So is such and such, though, to look at him, you might not think it. The reader begins to reflect: Mr. Justice A. certainly looks more like a “typical” plumber than a judge of the High Court; little Doctor B. may well be a gentleman-rider, but he is not—and could not be—the leading authority on infantile paralysis: General C. might be a lay-reader, a Scotch gardener, anything but a man who is “every inch a soldier.”

The dramatist suffers from lack of space. He knows, to be sure, that High Court judges are not turned out of a mould; but he has no time to explain why he dresses a character as a plumber when he is not in fact a plumber. The answer, obviously, would be that he is more concerned with realistic accuracy than with his audience’s mistaken fancies; but, so long as the audience is indifferent to this kind of truth, he will get no sympathetic hearing.

And audiences have so little appetite for truth that authors have to reduce their doses to the point at which they will at least be swallowed, albeit with a wry face. When the wedding-march is played, the audience believes—because it wants to believe—that hero and heroine will live happily ever afterwards. They will believe this though the papers that morning have announced that three thousand marriages will have been dissolved before the end of the year. The asylums, they know, are filled with every kind of mental eccentric; and, outside, there are more eccentrics than are ever certified insane.

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This does not prevent their saying of play or novel: "You know, people don't behave like that." So the playwright—and to a lesser degree the novelist—takes his stand on the irreducible minimum of truth that no audience in the world can controvert. He descends to the average experience and credulity of what he considers the average reader or playgoer.

So long as this results only in fettering his choice of theme and treatment, his crime is chiefly against his art; when he perverts his own conception of life to fit the prejudices of those whom he believes to be wrong, he commits a crime against morals. No man knows the secret places of another man's heart well enough to say when he is blind and when he is feigning blindness: it is safer to leave motives undiscussed and to concentrate attention on effects. The vast, new-born film-industry may be trying to paint a faithful picture of life; it may be trying to turn its audience's attention from life as it is to life as it might be; it is certainly not representing life.

Whenever I see a film I wonder what impression it has left on the minds of those who make up their view of life chiefly at second-hand, from books and plays and cinematograph performances. I wonder if this new industry is not the most colossal engine of misrepresentation that the world has ever seen. I wonder whether a generation that has been reared on films and then sent out into the world will find any connection between

LIFE AND FILM-LIFE

When Mr. William Harcourt became a law-officer and was required to take a knighthood, it is said that

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Mr. Gladstone tried to soften the blow by offering him a baronetcy. Mr. Harcourt, however, chose the knighthood on the grounds that the honour (The Squire of Malwood did not use the word) would die with him.

Family reasons apart, it is easy to understand this reluctance. In the Victorian era, your baronet had a lamentable reputation: sometimes he was bold, usually he was bad, often he was both. His cruelties and excesses stained the pages of all the more sensational novels; the shadow of his handsome but dissipated face lay, like that of some fallen angel, darkly across the melodramatic stage. The full range of his iniquity, suggested but hitherto never explored, was laid bare by Gilbert in *Ruddigore; or the Witch's Curse*; and this pitiless exposure compelled every baronet with a spark of decent feeling to realize that it was more than time for him to turn over a new leaf.

Six-and-thirty years have passed since *Ruddigore* was first played in London; a new generation of baronets has come into existence; and a quieter, steadier lot of men you could not wish to meet. The drinking bouts and gaming parties, the quarrels and assaults and abductions which made their father's names so detestable have either gone out of fashion or been driven underground. You may read that a baronet is undergoing public examination in bankruptcy or that he has been cited as a correspondent; but that is the sort of thing that may happen to any one. The only place where you may find him at his old tricks is in the studio of a film-producing company.

Once there, he seems hardly responsible for his ac-

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tions. And who is? It is ridiculous to talk of free-will when the producer is dictating your destiny to you through a megaphone. Outside, you may reasonably plead that there are baronets and baronets; within the studio there is but one brand, but one brand of everything. And it is at this point that life and film-life begin to part company, for the first two baronets you see in the street will be as different as chalk and cheese; they will differ much in appearance and morals, but they will differ most of all, perhaps, in their frames. In the studio, however, there is but one brand of home for a baronet: a thing of panels and wide spaces and antlers and tiger-skin rugs and villainous portraits of villainous ancestors. Baronets, you see, maintain the grand style; and, when the set is manufactured in California, even the spittoons are heroic in size and blazoned with unheraldic devices.

Strong, clear outlines are the first aim of the producer; and contrasts are the second. From Adam, his first father, he learned to know good and evil; for him, right is always right, wrong is ever wrong; and his puppets are less the playthings in a game than the symbols of eternal vice and virtue. If his hero be a baronet without fear and without reproach, keep your hand over your watch when the false baronet is flung on the screen. He is of the breed to frighten naughty children into docility. Vice has her strong, clear outlines no less than virtue: you would know the villain if you saw him alone; by contrast with the hero, he is already of another world. The importance of contrast is vital to the film-producer. Should your baronet have riches in

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addition to rank, you would be touched by the lowly estate of the handmaiden whom he espouses in the last smiling close-up; should he have position and nothing wherewith to keep it up, you may be sure that the American heiress who saves him is not like any pauper American heiresses that you may know.

If you depended on films for your conception of any life that may be remote from your own, you would come to feel that the life of the studio is vastly more picturesque than the life of the street. The men are handsomer, the women more seductive. Nothing is done by halves; and there is a completeness in their triumphs and disasters which you might seek vainly in the monotonous lives of your friends. But, then, your friends make life monotonous for themselves because they are half asleep; they do not feel deeply, like these people of the screen. Some little joy and grief comes to the dullest of us; we have our moments of surprise, perhaps our gusts of anger or jealousy; but we have not been taught to "register" emotion. To a child reared in the tense atmosphere of a picture-theatre, the people of the streets must seem figures of lifeless clay: what has happened to the demoniacal rage, the maniac laughter and the epileptic gestures of the studio?

From time to time a youthful offender explains the robbery or murder for which he is standing trial by saying that he has only imitated what he saw done "at the pictures." A few *obiter dicta* from the judge give the cue for a newspaper controversy on *Cinematographs and Juvenile Crime*. One letter blames the producer; another the Board of Film Censors; a third the parents

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of young film-lovers. Nothing is done; and the controversy is cut short by the editor before any one has had time to prepare a defence of film-morality. Perhaps a defence is regarded as superfluous: the morals of a film are the morals of the old melodrama writ large. Villains are hissed, heroes are clapped; and the silence of death descends upon the theatre whenever any one's personal virtue is seriously jeopardized. The evil-doer may flourish for a time; but the sound instincts of the spectators demand that he shall be brought to book before the end. Otherwise the play would not have a "happy ending"; and a play without a happy ending is absurd.

The vigilance-committees and leagues of purity need not concern themselves with the wholesome lesson which a film keeps stored in its last reel. The great puritanical public of England and America will see to it that the devil always gets the worst of the argument. You may be depraved enough to enjoy a picture of vice triumphant if you really believe that vice sometimes triumphs and that art should be faithful to life; you would not, however, like other people to see you watching such a picture. If you want realism, you must go to the novelists for it; the film-world is simple and upright, it will think that you are encouraging vice. There is a task nearer to the hand of the vigilance-committees; and that is to explain that film-life is what life should be and not, unhappily, what it is at present. We shall come to it, no doubt, if we try hard enough; but, until our regeneration, some protection is owing to the children of the film-world. Disillusion awaits them if they think that

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life is a thousandth part as stirring as the producer tells them, a thousandth part as simple. Man is more complicated than a caption would lead them to suppose: he is not analysed exhaustively when he is called "weak, impetuous but good-natured." Men, even baronets, are not cast from a single mould; they do not reveal their emotions by formula; nor can they be sure that their virtue will be rewarded. It may be doubted whether a child of the film-world would recognize the life of the street; it is undoubted that no child of the street would recognize the presentation of life which the film-world has evolved. We may come to it in time, but at present it is only an ideal.

Perhaps—who knows?—in time the producers of films will give a representation of things and people that will be recognizable by those who have not been reared in a picture-theatre. Life and novel-life are becoming interchangeable; life and stage-life are drawing closer together. One never knows.

NASSAU. 1 MARCH, 1923.

The Bahamas are so much nearer to the United States than to England that, if you take an American off his guard, you will find him speaking of them as if they were an additional state, or at least a territory. Nassau is already American in dress and half American in speech; in the hotels, the monetary unit is the dollar; and in two out of three gently rocking chairs on every verandah you will see the Saturday Evening Post being devoured. As a compliment to a visitor from England,

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the conversation takes on an international complexion; but, if literature is under discussion, this is a compliment to be avoided. English books circulate in America far more freely than American books in England; you are asked your opinion of men whose names you do not know; and, if you are not careful, you will give the impression that you think American books unreadable. The truth is that the books of American authors, with the exception of about a dozen, are almost unprocurable in England: if they are unread, the blame must be laid upon the publishers.

Meanwhile, until the exchange of books improves, it is difficult to make comparisons between the contemporary literature of the two countries; and conversation of a literary complexion is liable to degenerate into inconclusive debates of the Dickens-versus-Thackeray order. I overheard a discussion last night between three disputants who seemed sincere and humble-minded seekers after truth; and the only conclusion that I could bring away was that the most dangerous enemy to truth is a generalization. The battle seemed to be between

IMAGINATION AND EXPERIENCE

- A. We are agreed, then, that woman's contribution to the fine arts has been comparatively negligible.*
- B. The higher education of women is comparatively recent; and it is being applied to minds that have been retarded by centuries of enslavement. Woman is what man has made her.*
- A. Will the woman of the future contribute more to the fine arts than the woman of the past? I doubt it,*

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unless she changes in some way the part which sex plays in her life. If you like, women have been enslaved to men since the dawn of history; but they have been enslaved to nature since God created them male and female. So long as a woman's first natural interest is in child-bearing, she will remain an amateur in art, politics, commerce and everything else. Jane Austen, the Brontës were single women for most of their working lives.

- C. And for that reason I would never raise them to the highest plane of genius. Within its limits their work is exquisite: I think you may call it perfect. But the limits are quickly reached. Not one of them, for instance, could draw a man in such a way that you know him below his superficial mannerisms.
- A. No woman can. It is a strange inability; but women will admit it. Men have painted women by the score; and women are the first to testify to the skill and insight of the painter, which is usually greater than their own. Women, however, have never painted more than a tailor's-model man; they will confess that they are not themselves convinced, and we know that there is nothing in their own painting to convince them.
- B. Because they have no models to study. What could Jane Austen or the Brontës know of men? What can any woman know of any man but her husband, her father, her sons and her lovers? If you are Georges Sand, you may obtain all the models and all the experience you want; but not many women are prepared to follow in her steps at present. You are confront-

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ing woman with an awkward dilemma: either she marries or she does not marry; if she marries, her pre-occupation with child-bearing makes her an amateur in art; if she does not marry, she is deprived of the opportunity of studying one-half of the human species and nine-tenths of human relationship.

C. That is my case: in gaining her experience, a woman forfeits the chance of using it. So it always has been; so it always will be.

B. Until—forgive my harping so much on enslavement!—until women can live as free as men; until they can gain their experience . . .

C. They can learn something about men by taking lovers; they can only learn about child-bearing by bearing children. The experience carries its own disability.

A. When I hear you two talking about ‘experience’, I feel my feet on a threshold of a bigger question: is experience of real value? Every artist has more experience, in some directions, than he can possibly use; but, in others, he pretends to more experience than he can possibly have. To take the instance we have just examined: certain men have painted certain women in a way that women themselves say is unsurpassable.

B. They may possibly say it to flatter us.

A. If so, they prove in deed what they proclaim in speech: by their own judgment, by that of men and, still more, by that of time, they have never equalled the masterpieces which men have painted of women. Yet it was not for want of experience! No man could

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say from experience or by analogy how a girl felt at her first ball, her first indication of pregnancy, her first confinement. No man could say from the experience of his observation, for he can only observe that which another person wishes him to see or cannot keep him from seeing. No man could say from the second-hand experience of what a woman, what dozens of women may tell him. There is no common currency of thought between them; he is like a man, blind from birth, who has colour explained to him. Nevertheless, he is able to fire what he observes and what he is told with all that he divines.

- B.* Their unavoidable poverty of experience, then, need not be a disability to women?
- A.* Not so long as they have enough to feed their sympathy and stimulate their imagination. I think we must agree that when the artist oversteps the narrow limits of his meagre personal experience, he depends wholly on a sixth sense. You may call it imagination, insight, divination . . .
- B.* Intuition? If you are right, how do you reconcile woman's admitted inferiority in imaginative literature with her admitted superiority of intuition?
- C.* If the question is addressed to us both, I must answer that I have never admitted woman's alleged superiority of intuition. Where is the evidence of it? If you mean some instinctive, irrational second-sight into character, will you maintain first of all, from your personal observation, that such a thing exists? For myself, I have never seen it. And, if it exists, why is it so little employed? The most im-

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portant choice in a woman's life is that of the man whom she is to marry: does 'intuition' guide her to a wise choice? Does she make no mistakes? Are there no unhappy marriages? Is she better off, with her intuition, than man, without it?

B. Women reach conclusions without conscious reasoning. That is one form of intuition.

C. But are they the right conclusions? If you said that women acted on impulse more than men, I should agree with you. They like and dislike without knowing why. Thanks to their long enslavement, they have learned to be vastly more patient than men. They are quicker to observe and to adjust themselves, for they have been trained for thousands of years to compete with one another, to watch for signs too small for a man's attention. But they have had to fight for existence and preeminence so long that they can never stand aside from the battle. To a woman, every question is a personal question; and, when she can find no personal application, she loses interest in it. For this reason she can never be a judge of character, for she must always assay a man or woman in relation to herself; and, when she lights by accident on a right diagnosis, her judgment is always liable to be warped by flattery.

B. Before we go farther, I should like to remind you of the propositions to which you are already committed: that women have no more intuition than men and perhaps rather less; that imagination is greater and more necessary than experience . . .

A. The greatest imaginative writer in the history of

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literature had so little experience of anything outside the life of a hack-writer and stock-company player that certain half-witted creatures who believe that a man must be a woman before he can understand women have made a present of his plays to another man who at least had opportunities of studying all sorts and conditions of men.

B. You mean Shakespeare? Before you dismiss the Baconians as half-witted, I should like to ask whether you have examined the evidence which they put forward. Put very simply, their case is . . .

And so *ad infinitum*

NASSAU. 2 MARCH, 1923.

It is incredible! I have been here three weeks. And it is even more incredible that I am leaving here to-morrow. As I told you, one of the greatest charms of this place is that you become part of its life with so little effort. At the end of very few days, you seem to know everybody, to know about everybody; you develop views on local politics and take sides in local vendettas. I feel as if I had lived here for years.

And yet I cannot believe that three whole weeks have passed since I landed here. The days have been so tranquil that I have lost count of time; and I had a shock to-day when I remembered that I must submit to the formidable enquiries on which the United States Government insists before an alien may set foot on American soil. There is an anomaly here, by the way: American visitors are admitted to New Providence without hin-

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drance; but, when a British subject wishes to approach or leave this part of the British Empire by way of New York or Florida, he is treated like an intending immigrant. As a matter of courtesy, could not the United States Government issue special permits for passengers in transit? It is a waste of energy, time and money to impose a questionnaire and a medical examination and a head-tax on travellers who enter America with the single purpose of leaving again at the earliest possible moment.

My preliminaries have been completed at last. A few farewells remain to be taken. And I have one more crime to commit. An American lady has presented me with three books to read on my way through Florida: I wish to lose them or destroy them or give them to some one who is really worthy of them. Ingratitude! , you say. I know. And ingratitude is a crime. I have anticipated you. But I do not wish to cumber my luggage for the sake of a gratitude which I do not feel. The donor has already given me an exhaustive summary of each book; I have told her that I know them better from her account than if I read them for myself; we have agreed that their literary merit is negligible; I suspect her of giving them to me because she is unwilling to cumber her own luggage; and she has tried to persuade me against my better judgment by saying that they are, all three,

BOOKS WITH HAPPY ENDINGS

As all life ends in death, as all novels treat of life and as death is seldom an occasion of happiness, the

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novel-with-a-happy-ending carries a self-imposed penalty. You suspect that the author is shirking a logical conclusion. Either he is tampering with the course of nature; or he is arbitrarily stopping short before the sap dries and the green leaf turns yellow. It is *suggestio falsi* or *suppressio veri*; and the only defence is that a novelist is not bound to follow a theme to its logical conclusion. In life there are no beginnings and no ends: birth is an epilogue to what has gone before, death is a prologue to what follows after; the beginning and end which an artist imposes on the infinite for purposes of a finite work of art are bound to be arbitrary. As he is under no compulsion to begin with a birth-cry, so he is under no compulsion to end with a death-rattle.

So stated, the defence is complete against the charge of suppressing what is true; it is not, however, an answer to that of suggesting what is false. Truth is an accommodation between speaker and listener: that which is "literally true" may be practically false if it conveys a wrong impression and if the speaker knows that it will convey a wrong impression. A surgeon creates something of a false impression if he states that an operation has been completely successful when in fact the patient is dying of syncope: it may be literally true that a growth has been successfully removed, but, when a layman speaks of successful operations, he means operations from which the patient is going to recover. This may be a careless handling of language; but the surgeon is speaking to laymen and must accommodate his ideas of truth to theirs.

Is not an artist under a similar obligation not to mis-

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lead the laity? Is he not guilty of *suggestio falsi* whenever he makes a colourless statement which he knows the imagination of the layman will paint rose-tinted with sentiment? If wedding-bells are heard in the last chapter of a novel its readers are going to believe that bride and groom lived happily ever afterwards; it is vain for the novelist to ask them whether they themselves know of so many happy marriages, vain to enquire why this one man and woman should be created immune from the bodily sicknesses, the financial catastrophes, the disappointments and disillusiones that afflict the rest of mankind. The readers will believe in that happy married-life unless the novelist warns them that it will not be happy; they will probably follow their fancy in spite of warning, but at least the novelist's conscience is clear.

Mr. Galsworthy, whose art shirks no conclusion and fears nothing except ugliness and intellectual dishonesty, has set up a sign-post at the end of *The Forsyte Saga*. Poor little Fleur is not going to be happy ever afterwards; nor was Lady Barbara in *The Patrician*; but, then, Mr. Galsworthy is concerned with life, which has no happy endings; and the reader who insists that everything shall "come right" in the last chapter must look elsewhere. By the same test, he had better not sadden himself with tragedies of Shakespeare, for nothing "comes right" in the last act of these: your dramatist of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not satisfied that his tragedy ended happily while one man, woman or child was left alive. And that, perhaps, is why tragedy-writing has gone out of fashion: a forced happy-

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ending is bad enough, but a forced unhappy-ending is worse. All life may end in death; but the life of a numerous theatrical company need not all end at the same moment, need not end violently.

“As old and new at once as nature’s self”, this demand for a happy ending goes back to the decent antiquity of Homer, who arranged for the suitors to be punished and for Odysseus to live happily ever afterwards with Penelope. There is no hint that Telemachus, for instance, may prove a trifle wild or that Penelope, after so many years of grass-widowhood, may resent having a man always about the palace or that Odysseus may find life a little flat. A Greek audience, indeed, knowing its Odysseus, may have realized that such a born wanderer and gallant would never stay rooted to Ithaca: it would be as rash as it would be presumptuous to charge Homer with trying to mislead his original audience, but undoubtedly he misled subsequent audiences for thirty centuries until Tennyson shattered the illusion.

“*An aged wife*” is the phrase he then makes Odysseus apply to patient Penelope.

“*I cannot rest from travel,*” the wanderer complains;

“*I will drink*

“*Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy’d*

“*Greatly, have suffer’d greatly.*”

As “the long day wanes”, we may fancy him watching “the slow moon climb” and thinking of other moons at which he and Calypso gazed. “*The lights begin to twinkle on the rocks*”; he is reminded of the lights that

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twinkled on the rocks that night when he first met Circe. . . .

And then he makes ready his ship

*"To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the Western stars" . . .*

until he finds a happier ending than the bleak embrace of Penelope's shrivelled arms. No settling-down after the war for Odysseus!

It is strange that this cynical twist should be given by Tennyson, of all men. The era which he adorned — more sentimental than any of which a record has descended — was sentimentally enslaved to the happy ending; the grandest figure in Victorian literature produced more happy endings than any six novelists of another age. This, too, in spite of a morbid relish for protracted death-scenes; or perhaps it would be truer to say "because of" it. With Dickens, the falsely happy and the falsely unhappy ending are two symptoms of the same disease; he turned with shuddering lips and closed eyes from suffering, misery and death: when he was constrained to describe them, he could only caricature them; but he never tried to describe them when he could fill their place with pictures of extravagant well-being. Death is seldom so dreadful as Dickens always made it; life is never so rich in compensations as he pretended in the last few pages of every book, where forgotten maids-of-all-work were hustled through the chapters and down the ages to marry forgotten boot-boys in the final paragraph.

Avowedly, in everything he wrote, Dickens set before himself the ideal of the book that cheers. He had an

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animal love of food and drink; you may feel that he cheered himself as he cheered his readers, by his endless accounts of feasting and jollity. He loved laughter and noise and high spirits. And he detested the thought that the myriad children of his stupendous brain should slip away hungry or sick or heart-sore from the glow of his last page. They *must* end happily. . . .

There is no suppression of the truth, no suggestion of falsehood here. He may have deceived himself, but at least he convinced himself: he only tells the reader that these people will live happily ever afterwards because he feels it in his bones. And, as an alternative defence, he could always plead that he was not transcribing life, that his people are not as other people. "*These our actors,*

*As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air."* . . .

This plea is not admissible when the novelist sets out to create an illusion of life and then tries to improve on life; and it is something like selling the Holy Ghost for money when the artist allows himself to be over-persuaded by publisher or public. Meredith might have made a "best-seller" of *Beauchamp's Career* if he had successfully applied artificial respiration to Nevil Beauchamp in a postscript; and Mr. Conrad, in *Victory*, could have won the hearts of all who hanker after happy endings if he had killed Ricardo and Jones instead of Heyst and Lena. He resisted the temptation; but it was offered again when the novel was dramatized. Then the audience had its happy ending; but it was a most unhappy play.

In the Bahamas

As all life ends in death and as death is seldom an occasion of happiness, a novel that treats of life and has a "happy ending" comes under suspicion of falsifying the evidence of human experience, even of flying in the face of natural laws. The novelist who attempts such a task is like Tithonus refusing to recognize the inevitability of death. Tithonus had his way; but the result was not quite what he expected.

NASSAU. 3 MARCH, 1923.

It is done. I have said good-bye to this enchanted island. Rawson Square and Bay Street are gradually receding; Government House slips behind the huge pink mass of the New Colonial Hotel; the magic water of New Providence turns to a richer blue as we leave the shelter of Hog Island and head, past the light-house, for open sea.

Until the sun drops with its tropical abruptness we can watch the scattered green humps of a few outlying islands; but, by the time that the moon comes up like a vast orange lantern hanging out over the starboard bow, we have lost sight of land.

We are due in at Miami, on the east coast of southern Florida, at daybreak to-morrow. There is a train at mid-day to Key West; and a boat next morning from Key West to Havana. Most of the passengers are northward-bound; and it is impressive to hear them talking about the railroad-system of America. They are very complete travellers; I am not. Though I have covered some hundreds of thousands of miles by sea and land, I have never learned how to ask questions of por-

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ters or to understand their answers. And yet I believe that the traveller who gets the greatest enjoyment out of travelling is

THE INCOMPLETE TRAVELLER

In travel, as in every other art, there are degrees of incompetence. If, in despite of one printed warning, you *penchez* yourself *en dehors*, if you flout a second in order to "alight while the train is in motion" or if, like Mr. Jingle's friend, you abstractedly eat sandwiches on a coach-top till your head is taken off by the first low arch, you are so incomplete a traveller that your travelling-days will be evil and brief. The essence of travel is that you shall get from one place to another; your complete traveller reaches the destination marked on his ticket, he arrives on the expected day with at least as much luggage as he had on starting, he knows when the sleeping-cars are taken off and the luncheon-cars are hitched on, his conversation bristles with narrow gauges and high-levels; and he has sandwiches and a tea-basket for every emergency. The incomplete traveller . . . Well, you may know him by his air of unaffected helplessness, by his childlike trust in his fellow-men and by a third thing which you will have discovered if you have the patience to follow him to his journey's end.

Observe such an one as he moons forlornly on the safe and charted way from New Providence to Cuba. Thousands of people do this journey each year; the booklets issued by the railroad- and shipping-offices are fool-proof; and, if you cannot read, there are helpful clerks who will explain everything very patiently.

In the Bahamas

The incomplete traveller can read, but he has nothing on which to employ this blessing of education; to obtain a booklet he must open conversation with a stranger; and the incomplete traveller is the shyest man who was ever allowed abroad without a nurse. He is staring disconsolately at a map of the West Indies, when an American railway-magnate greets him.

The Railway Magnate. I surely do hope you're not leaving the Bahamas?

The Incomplete Traveller. I must . . . if I can find out how.

The R. M. But that's as easy as falling off a log. Have you gotten your reservation? Well, come right along to the office; and I'll fix you up. (The R. M. then takes the I. T. to a dispensary, where he is examined by a doctor, to a shipping-agency, where he secures a cabin and tells the story of his life to the United States immigration-officials, and to the ship, where he is presented with several letters of introduction and commended to the care or pity of the captain.)

Half a day passes.

An American Alien-Officer. Purpose in coming to the United States?

The I. T. Well, you see, I had an idea of getting a train at Miami and going down to Key West. If you'd rather I did n't . . .

The A. A-O (swiftly). When you get to Havana, you can claim return of head-tax. Here's the ad-dress. What's this? A letter to the superintendent of the Florida East Coast Railroad, Miami? 'Nother to

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Key West? Guess you're fixed; but if there's anything I can do . . . George, you start in and tote these bags to the customs. Pleasant journey. *You're* welcome, sir.

(Thanks to his introduction, the I. T. is graciously received at the Royal Palm Hotel, Miami, and at the office of the railroad-superintendent, where an obliging clerk secures him his reservation, buys his transportation and sees him on board his train. As there has been a breakdown farther north, another half-day passes and this would be more than ample time for the I. T. to drift out of the Key West train into one bound for Kansas City, Denver or Los Angeles. He is, however, once more saved from disaster by his unmistakable air of helplessness. This touches the heart of an American and his wife who also are bound for Havana by way of Key West.)

The American. You can't go wrong if you stay with us, sir. This car will be hitched on to the Jacksonville train . . .

His Wife. If this gentleman comes from England, he'll want a high-ball. Take your grip into the drawing-room while I fix the conductor.

The I. T. But I thought America was dry. In fact, I provided against that before leaving Nassau. If we are to be fellow-travellers . . .

The American. Can you beat it?

(The alliance thus established on the ruins of the Volstead Law carries the Incomplete Traveller in complete comfort and safety to Key West, where a further letter

In the Bahamas

from the Railway Magnate secures him the personal attention of the superintendent there. A cabin is reserved for him on the Havana boat; he is put under the protection of the purser, who in turn, struck by his air of helplessness, introduces him to his oldest friend.)

The Purser's Oldest Friend. Not your first visit to Cuba, sir?

The I. T. (helplessly). Yes.

The P. O. F. (eagerly). Have you made your hotel reservation? Then say, listen. Havana's just crowded with tourists this time of year. I'm located at the Plaza; and if you'd care to have me write to the manager, he'll fix you. . . .

Half a day passes; and the ship berths alongside the docks in Havana. As the Incomplete Traveller drives to his hotel, he reflects that the essence of travel is to pass from one place to another; well, he has passed safely—however little he may deserve it and however little any one else may have expected it—from New Providence to Cuba. Were he of a religious turn, he would be down on his knees, like the Pilgrim Fathers or the Swiss Family Robinson, humbly returning thanks; instead, though he is humble enough, he is brooding resentfully on the difference between himself and other men. The boat from Nassau to Miami, the train from Miami to Key West and the boat from Key West to Havana have been filled to suffocation with Complete Travellers: efficiency is stamped on every face. *They* never get into wrong trains or lose their luggage or forget to order rooms; if they did, they would know how to retrieve their

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blunders. They ask questions of strange conductors; they understand the answers; they act on them. And, as a result, on the expected day the complete traveller reaches the destination marked on his ticket with at least as much baggage as he had with him at the outset. In travelling, to be shy is to live under a curse.

What would the Incomplete Traveller not give to enter his hotel with the air of possession and assurance displayed by these others! As the Purser's Oldest Friend warned him, Havana is crowded with tourists at this time of year; the manager has promised him a double-room (with bath) later in the day, when the present occupants have vacated it; but at present he can only sit helplessly in the hall, watching the arrival of the Complete Travellers who crossed with him. They are late; but, then, with their reservations and all, they have no need to hurry.

First Complete Traveller. Start in and order a round of Bacardi cocktails while I fix things with the room-clerk. And if any bum hands you a line of talk about *freedom* . . . I guess the statue of Liberty was erected to mark where freedom died. (Exit)

Second Complete Traveller. Eddie's peeved.

Third Complete Traveller. You'd be peeved if a fool prohibition-agent pinched you for rumming. Eddie slipped him a five-dollar bill, but he had to spill the booze out on the floor.

Second Complete Traveller. He'd have better call to be peeved if he'd seen his grip walking down the gangway under a dago horse-thief's arm.

In the Bahamas

First Complete Traveller (returning). Say, listen, gotta get a location some place else. This hotel is full for the season. . . .

In travelling, to be shy is to live under a curse; remember this, when you meet an incomplete traveller, and do what you can to help him on his way. You would hate to see him "pinched for rumming" or robbed of his grip and turned away from his hotel like these others. You will recognize him by his unaffected helplessness and by his childlike faith in his fellow-man. If you have had the patience to follow him to his journey's end, you may recognize him also by a third thing: his faculty of reaching it more quickly and comfortably than the complete traveller who crowds his conversation with narrow gauges and is never afraid to ask questions of strange conductors.

PART FIVE

FROM NASSAU TO HAVANA AND KINGSTON

PART FIVE

From Nassau to Havana and Kingston

MIAMI. 4 MARCH, 1923.

We sighted land at daybreak and drew in to port between 5.0 and 6.0 a. m. If you have inferred, from what I last wrote to you, that I am already at the end of this stage of my journey, your inference is sound. I wished to put on record with the least possible delay that I was safely out of Florida. Now I must go back; not, thank Heaven, to the mainland, but to the point in this journal at which I leapt forward to tell you of my escape.

A LOST ILLUSION

It is usually unwise to make mental pictures of a place before you go there; it is always unwise to make them on the strength of a single phrase. "Florida" may induce a vision of orange-groves; and, from this, you may think of the whole state as a vast southern California, the garden and orchard of America. "The south" may be associated in your mind with the civil war, with 'Yanks' and 'Rebs', with slavery and the old

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colonial families. You may imagine that you are coming to a land of eternal sunshine wherein the territorial aristocracy of the United States is making its last stand against the industrial advance of the north.

The sunshine is waiting for you; in other respects you will find that you have been laying up disappointment for yourself. If you land in Miami, you are south of the orange belt. The country is flat and uninteresting: save in the towns it is sparsely populated; and the towns are an ever-increasing chain of subtropical Blackpools. Within living memory, southern Florida was a neglected land of dreary swamps and barren scrub. Then the Florida East Coast Railroad blazed a trail to Long Key; and, as the Americanization of Cuba set up a demand for American goods, the quarter-circle of island between Long Key and Key West was linked by a sea-road that is one of the engineering wonders of the world.

Step by step, as the tracks were laid further south and farther, the Florida east coast was developed and settled as an American riviera. Palm Beach, West Palm Beach, St. Augustine, Miami; and, as you leave Miami by the southern road, you can see the town spreading under your eyes. The boom in land has been prodigious; new streets are being carved on the fringe of primeval bush; new houses are racing to overtake the new streets. In a few years, you feel, the whole of this peninsula from Jacksonville to Key West will be an unbroken line of bungalows and vast standardized Florida-East-Coast-Company hotels. The industrial north is very rich and very numerous; America, more than any other country, is the slave of fashion; and, since it be-

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came fashionable to take a winter holiday in Florida, the slaves of fashion have been pouring south till their old resorts in Palm Beach and St. Augustine can contain them no longer. The climate is perfect; the bathing is admirable; it is a world newly created for the holiday-maker.

For that reason it makes no more appeal to an alien bird of passage than the North Wales coast would make to a New Englander who landed in Liverpool and discovered that he could not reach London without passing through Llandudno or Rhyl and spending a night at Blackpool. There is greater evidence of wealth than of knowledge how to spend it. Both sides of every street in these gaudy mushroom cities are black with gleaming lines of new automobiles; the garish stores are wanton in their enticements; the temptations to spend money are unlimited. If there are no roundabouts or swing-boats, that is because they do not happen to be an American fashion; every other kind of catch-penny sideshow is there. In a world created for holiday-makers from the industrial north, swing-boats would make their appearance if there were any demand for them; Miami exists to please; you can hardly walk from the custom-house to your hotel without being invited to drive round the city in a "rubber-neck car" — as likely as not, preceded or accompanied by a brass band — and to explore attractive blocks of real estate.

Evidently the city enjoys an enormous popularity; and for an alien to disparage it would be as impertinent as for an American to find fault with the amenities of Southend. Every country gets the watering-place it de-

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serves; and, if an alien feels unworthy of Florida, he had better go elsewhere. And this is what every alien tries to do in the shortest possible time.

When the train leaves the fishing-camp of Long Key, the scenery changes. What there is of land is still monotonously flat and swampy, still dreary with its endless stretches of dull green scrub; but, on leaving the mainland, the track is carried for sixty-odd miles along an artificial sea-road linking the islands to Key West. The north Caribbean sea is on your left; the Gulf of Mexico on your right; between them, the permanent way has been built of white coral blocks between wooden breakwaters; and, as you look to east or west, you would fancy that you were skimming over the surface of the water.

By the time you reach Key West, you are half-way to Havana. Here, you may feel, is a setting for adventure and romance: you are perched between two seas, at Land's End or beyond; a lonely pioneer, you may feel.

Not for long, however, will you feel that. Key West is a part of that standardized, relentless system which the Florida East Coast Company has built round the Florida East Coast Railroad; it is a unit in the great mechanical business of development. You are lucky indeed to find such an hotel as the Casa Marina out here on the edge of cultivation; but it is a strangely impersonal and soulless hotel. Very clean, very new, very huge, it is own brother to the Florida East Coast Company hotels in Miami and Nassau: you find the same design, decoration and furniture, the same food at the

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same hours, the same local customs and speech, the same fauna and flora, the same bell-boys and waitresses. You will be prudent to repeat every morning: "I am in Key West, Key West, Key West, though I might be anywhere else in this astonishingly uniform country".

It is not the fault of America that this part of the United States does not happen to be a second California; but, when Florida came to be developed, it should have dropped its lovely and misleading name.

KEY WEST. 5 MARCH, 1923.

I shall be twelve hours late in reaching Havana, as there has been a breakdown farther north and the boat which should have left at ten this morning will now not leave till ten to-night. My neighbors in this hotel, meanwhile, are describing Cuba to one another with such wealth of detail that I feel I have spent half my life there. The accounts vary, for my neighbours are describing the Cuba of their imagination: none of them has been there; and to one it is a country such as you might find on the west coast of South America, to another it is a piece carved out of southern Spain. Havana, you conclude, is made in the image of Lima: hot, dusty and glaring; backward and indolent. In the next breath you are told that the American occupation changed all that: Havana is modern, progressive, industrial, the Barcelona of the Caribbean.

Barcelona or Lima? It is a hard choice: why not 'Manchester or Berlin'? A third voice — the voice

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of a romantic who feels the horror of such an alternative — breaks in with a third description of

CUBA UNVISITED

“You have never been in Havana? Then, ladies, I envy you the experience of these next few days. You speak Spanish? No? I will do my best; but if I fail for a word, you will excuse me. . . . It is like Madrid, old Madrid ‘*Where softly sighs of love the light guitar.*’ On a hot, velvet night you walk with a debonair swing of your cloak; the stars to guide you; and your own star, maybe, to light you into an adventure and out of it.”

The speaker smiled at some private thought and then sighed. He was a handsome boy of five-and-twenty, with gracious manners and a smile that won the hearts of his hearers; and his English, in spite of a foreign accent, was purer and more easily intelligible than that of his audience, who hailed from a middlewest state.

*“Two sparkling eyes a lattice hid:
Two eyes as darkly bright as love’s own star.”*

The young voice died away with a tremble of tears choked down. Every one looked vaguely embarrassed until Mrs. Alban P. Wontner asked the singer to go on with his cunning little song; then every one looked outraged.

“But I do not sing!”, the boy protested. “And you will hear all the singing you want in Havana. If I can be of any assistance there . . .”

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He bowed comprehensively and was moving away when Miss Marguerite Wontner took advantage of the darkness to kick her mother menacingly.

"Say, if you're by yourself alone, we'd be very glad to have you sit with us," said Mrs. Wontner obediently. "This is my daughter, Miss Wontner. . . ."

At each introduction the young man bowed. At the end he said:

"My name is . . . Sebastian."

"I've always been crazy to meet some one called Sebastian," murmured Miss Wontner encouragingly. "Are you Spanish?"

"You were telling us about your adventures in Havana," interposed Miss Wontner's mother.

With rapid strokes the young man traced the outlines of a majestic city.

"The harbour, the citadel, the plaza with the great houses of the grandees." The flashing eyes veiled for a moment under their heavy lids; and he seemed to be speaking to himself. "The green wooden casements are inexorably barred; the tall gates of wrought iron shelter an empty *patio*; the only sound is the faint splash of a tired fountain. Then, as you halt at a cross-roads, waiting for predestination to urge you one way or another, your shoulder is lightly brushed. You bend down and pick up a single rose." . . .

Miss Wontner gasped; her mother prepared to snatch her away at the first sign of danger. The rest of the party shook suspicious heads at the tale and its teller.

"The street has no name, the house no number," continued the young man. "The casements are shut again.

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Before you leave, you may, perhaps, mark the lintel in such wise that you will know it when you come next night at the same hour; in such wise, too, that an understanding eye may know who set the mark that is proudest in all Spain." With the end of his stick he sketched a rough cross in the dust and rubbed it out with his toe. "The broken sword-hilt which the Salamancas have borne in their blazon since Roncesvalles, when nothing else was left them. You have never heard of it? Nor of them, perhaps? Well . . . The Salamancas remain seated and covered in the presence of their king. All that was left to them! And, to be sure, since Roncesvalles, nothing has come to them, for the Salamancas are not bagmen or usurers; bred to arms, they now have no one of equal rank to cross swords with them. It was well for the people of this house to know . . . just to know. . . . Next night at the same hour one sets out on the same road; but there is no need to look for the mark on the lintel. It has been seen by other eyes than those for which it was intended; some one, too, has been before. . . . His body is lying face-downwards by the tall gates of wrought iron; from curiosity one turns him with one's foot, but he is unknown to one. Not unknown, however, is the half-moon knife of the Toledos which one finds buried to the hilt between the dead man's shoulders."

A little scream escaped Mrs. Wontner's horrified lips; and the young man, misunderstanding her, turned in smiling explanation:

"The Toledos always stab in the back: it is their only means of reaching their enemies, who always run when

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a Toledo comes into battle. Hitherto the Salamancas and Toledos have not had occasion to meet in this way. It promises, you feel, to be amusing; but in the meantime one does no good by cooling one's heels in the street when one might be at the opera. You have seen pictures of it, no doubt?"

Nobody betrayed the slightest interest in the description that followed; but Sebastian, on his side, seemed to feel no interest in the story which he had so casually begun and now so casually abandoned.

"If for nothing else, Havana would be famous for its opera," he concluded. "The house is the biggest in the world; and the beauty of the women, the splendour of their dresses and the sheen of their diamonds put Paris and London to shame."

"Go on about the rose," begged Miss Marguerite Wontner.

"I am coming to that," answered the young man. "As every one knows, the Salamanca box is on the right hand side as you enter, next to the stage; when a Salamanca goes accompanied by a friend, they use the royal box as well. The Toledos, of course, sit opposite and exercise, from time to time, their immemorial right of firing on to the stage and into the orchestra when the music displeases them."

"Gracious!", screamed Mrs. Wontner.

"You have nothing of that kind in America?", the young man enquired with polite interest. "The Spaniards are an old people; some would call us a cruel people, but I prefer to think that we have only a different sense of values. One's life, after all, is not every-

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thing: compared with one's honour, it is a very small thing."

"Guess I can look after my honour without gunning the band," growled one of the young men who had been edged into the background by Sebastian's coming.

"It depends on the point of view. Some music is an offence to one's hearing and an insult to one's intelligence. Rightly or wrongly, the Toledos were sensitive to insult and offence. We all have our likes and dislikes: I, for example, — if one may introduce the personal note — dislike being interrupted."

"Go on about the rose," whispered Miss Wontner ingratiatingly.

"If *you* wish it," answered Sebastian.

"You were saying you went to your box?"

"No! Not *that* night!" The young man lay back and laughed at the suggestion. "No, indeed! . . . That night, as one walked round the Circle, the house seemed silent and empty. A bell was tolling; and, as one reached the Salamanca box, one found it draped in black. A joke, you feel, can be carried too far, especially when you see pinned to the door a monstrous card inscribed with the deep sympathy of the Duke and Duchess of Toledo." . . .

The long silence that followed was punctuated by clucking noises from Mrs. Wontner.

"My!" whispered her daughter.

"Can you beat it? ", the young man in the outer darkness demanded, one of another.

"The joke takes on a little different complexion," Sebastian resumed, "when you go inside and find a rose

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between the pages of your score. The Toledo box is empty; but there is a lingering smell of gun-powder and a blue cloud of smoke where the conductor once stood.

“ ‘ Another of Toledo’s tantrums ’, you say; and you would give much to see his face if he knew that in one of the band-parts which he had been flinging about the house there is a pencilled note from the duchess, making an assignation with you next day in the bull-ring. You have seen pictures of it?”

No one wanted to hear about the bull-ring, but Sebastian was merciless.

“ If for nothing else, Havana would be famous for its bull-ring,” he began. “ It is the biggest in the world; the skill of the toreadors and the ferocity of the bulls put Madrid to shame. If you will excuse me, I believe I have a sketch that I made when last I was in Cuba. You understand — you *will* understand, at least — that I am not able to go back there. . . . You will pardon me for a moment?”

With another comprehensive bow, the young man disappeared into the hotel. The eyes of his audience followed him; and Miss Marguerite Wontner announced that she was crazy to see him with a cloak and sword. The young men in the outer darkness agreed scornfully that Havana seemed a fool place anyway. Only Mrs. Wontner was silent, as any wife and mother might be when she reviewed the possibility of explaining to her husband how the heiress to the Wontner millions had become entangled with a Cuban grandee. It was not every one who could talk about “ my daughter, the Duchess of Salamanca ”; but these stories of notes and

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roses and fighting for other men's wives lay outside the experience of Smithstown, Illinois. Mr. Wontner was a roughneck; in business he had no rival, as the success of the Wontner pencil-pen testified; outside his business, he was limited and unsympathetic.

"How d'you make out we should have him introduced?" she enquired of her daughter.

"Sebastian?" Marguerite asked.

"Now, see, listen," said Mrs. Wontner severely, "if you go get fresh with that young man before your dad's had time to get a tab on him . . ."

"When a dago starts in fooling around . . ." began one of the young men in the outer darkness.

.

At the reception office Sebastian was asking for his key.

"I hope to give you a quieter room to-morrow, Mr. Briggs," said the resident manager.

"I hope you will," said the young man. "These people camp outside my window and talk all day and all night. I can't get a stroke of work done. It's intolerable."

"It surely is. Maybe if they got a hunch you were a writer . . .?"

"No, don't tell 'em that. They're leaving to-morrow for Havana; and things may be better when they've gone."

"Right, sir. . . . You'll be going to Havana yourself, Mr. Briggs, I guess, before you're through? Or maybe you've been there?"

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“No, never. I should rather like to see the place; but I can’t go till I’ve finished my present work.”

“A new book, Mr. Briggs?”

“An idea for a short story. Good-night.”

HAVANA. 6 MARCH, 1923.

I left Key West by moonlight yesterday evening and reached Havana at daybreak this morning. I had been told in England that I ought to visit Cuba without loss of time: the island was changing quickly; and that which had been wholly Spanish no more than thirty years ago would in another thirty years be wholly American.

At present the battle is drawn; the assimilation has hardly begun; and Havana is in essence and in outward aspect a city

WHERE EXTREMES MEET

The experiment is unique in history, this unofficial American suzerainty in Cuba. Other governments have annexed territories and handed them back; but they have not usually surrendered control of a position from which their own country can be menaced strategically, they have not usually withdrawn their protection from their own nationals when these have been encouraged to settle and to risk money in schemes of development; and they have never compensated themselves for their surrender by reserving almost unlimited powers of intervention.

When Cuba was ceded to the United States, the government in Washington had no experience of imperial

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administration; the people and press of America had no appetite for an imperial adventure; and a gentle sigh of relief rose from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast when Cuba was given the status of an independent republic. For geographical and commercial reasons, however, an independent republic was considered too dangerous an experiment to try, in a country unused to self-government, where American lives and fortunes were at stake. If Cuba misconducted herself, Washington reserved the right to step in and correct her; and, if intervention is rarely employed, the threat of intervention is always there; and the Cuban government holds office during the pleasure of the American.

If the experiment is unique, the success of the experiment is unique also. Cuba is orderly, well-governed and prosperous; and two civilizations, remote as the two poles, exist amicably side by side. The Latin meets the Anglo-Saxon; Spanish alternates with English; the north contends with the south, "hustle" with "mañana"; and the descendants of the strictest Catholic country have arrived at a concordat with the descendants of the puritans. In the language of politicians, "coalition" has not yet become "fusion"; but the working-partnership is complete.

This mingling of two utterly diverse peoples may be matched by the mingling of two utterly diverse styles in architecture. The old city, apart from its harbour and castle, might be reproduced a dozen times over in Spain; and, where American capital and enterprise have found a free hand, they have grafted on the old city a piece of very modern, very efficient America. The demand for

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sugar during the war brought immense prosperity to Cuba; the new rich built new houses; and a luxurious residential belt began to develop round the old city. The boom was followed by a slump; and the work of the development had to be suspended. The abiding wealth of Cuba is in her soil, however; and, when trade is normal again, the new city will resume its march into the country. Already the outskirts are a network of admirable roads, exquisite avenues of trees, flowers and shrubs; and between them are springing up magnificent private houses and palatial clubs and hotels.

It is in temperament and in the habits of daily life that extremes meet with most violent contrast and exist side by side in calmest accord. Compare the north American business-man with the Latin-American! Your Cuban, like his Spanish forefather, may leave his bed before sunset; but his day — the day of a civilized man, of one with a natural right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness — begins with dinner or with the Diqueri cocktail that precedes it. After dinner he may gamble or watch a game of Jai-Alai (the Latin-American holds the world's record as a spectator of others' energy); after that, he is content to sit and talk; after that, he will simply sit. Next day he allows the world to grow comfortably warm before he saunters to his office. You considerably make no appointment with him until 11.0 or 12.0; and then he may keep you waiting for an hour or two or three. If you take the precaution of saying '*ora inglesa*', it is different; that means 'punctually', as '*parola inglesa*' means 'word of honour'. Life is, at present, a trial of patience for

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the American business-man; but, with patience and with time, it is possible that he may bring the Cuban to his own level.

It is possible, on the other hand, that Cuba may conquer her conquerors. The island is the natural Riviera for America, as Florida can never hope to be; it has history, background, romance and magic to put the tawdriness and blatancy of Palm Beach and Miami to shame; it lies within the tropics; and, for all its differences from any American scene, it employs the familiar speech, the familiar currency. Day by day, the island is becoming more deeply Americanized; and it is almost the nearest refuge in which a citizen of the United States can seek asylum from prohibition. The business-man is far from being the only American that you meet in Cuba; and, as the great hotels and country-clubs rise up and expand, American visitors will come more and more to Havana for a winter-holiday.

As they will have no occasion or excuse for the rush and turmoil of business-life, they will perhaps surrender to the life of the place. If only for a month or two in each year, the south may conquer the north; and "mañana" may prevail over "hustle". And returning travellers will bring back to America new standards of values and new ways of living. It was from returning Anglo-Indians that the English learned the charms of a daily bath; Cuba, with her heritage from Spain, may have lessons to impart, perhaps even the lesson of leisure which has never yet been taught in America.

You have the opportunity of learning it here, if only you have the means. Havana is a city for millionaires;

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and indolent millionaires at that. The race-track and its attendant life epitomize much of Cuban-America. Rather more than a mile in length and oval in shape, the track was laid out by an American syndicate with a huge grand-stand, a betting-hall underneath it, lawns in front and the Jockey Club house, lawn and stand to one side. Such as the racing is, on the baked dusty course, there is plenty of it: rich and idle Havana can come here every day but Monday; it can loll comfortably, in Ascot frocks, under the awning of the Jockey Club stand. There it eats and drinks and smokes; making a supreme effort, it occasionally saunters across to the betting-hall, which at first sight looks like a gigantic railway-station, and backs its fancy with the bookmakers on the one side or at the *pari-mutuel* on the other; but more often it entrusts its bet to one of the official messengers who drift on to the stand. Everything is quiet, as there is no Tattersall's ring with its line of roaring bookmakers; there is no crowd on the rails; and leisured Havana seems to care more for the spectacle than for the sport. A bugle sounds; and a man rides slowly down to the post, in white cap, coat and breeches. He is followed by the horses in the order of the draw; there is a parade before each race and no preliminary canter, for leisured Havana is not interested in a horse's looks or action. Then the race is run, quietly, languidly; the track is raked over, as though it were the sand of a bull-ring; and very languidly, very quietly, the spectators receive their winnings from the official messengers and prepare for the next race. Any one can win if he will apply to the bar-tender at his hotel for information; every one

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will lose, on the day, if he carries his winnings to a casino where roulette is played with a double zero and the odds in every other game are pinched in favour of the bank.

But no sensible man goes to Havana in the expectation of making money; he is lucky if he escapes with the price of his return-ticket. He may, however, carry away new ideas of life as an art. It is the one art in which Havana is preeminent.

HAVANA. 7 MARCH, 1923.

I must have royal blood in my veins. How else can you explain a passion for sight-seeing and an unaffected delight in it which kings may equal but no king has ever excelled? And by sight-seeing I do not mean only those things which are said to possess historic interest; I mean the insides of things which are usually dressed up for public appearance. An enemy might call this vulgar curiosity about other people's business: we probably mean the same thing. Yesterday I satisfied my curiosity or gratified my intelligent interest in

THE MANUFACTURE OF CIGARS

I had seen tobacco growing in different parts of the world, but I had never seen it manufacturing.

When the leaves have been gathered, they are cured and tied at one end into bunches; the bunches are collected into "hands", the "hands" are packed in bales and the bales are sent to the factories. No stock is held: the cigars are manufactured as they are required;

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and the bales are brought into use as the merchants' orders come in.

The first process is to damp the leaves, strip them of their stalks and distribute them among the cigar-makers, who then pack the "filling", leaves inside a "wrapping" leaf, close one end with paste and trim the other. The finished cigar is then graded: first according to size, by passing through a hole in a wooden measure; then according to colour. When it has been banded and packed into a box, it is ready for export.

The greatest care is expended on the choice and handling of the outside leaf, which is of the finest quality and has to be most skilfully prepared. In shape and colour it is like a long, brown fish-skin, smelling strongly of ammonia. After the stalks have been removed, they are often used for making snuff; the odds and ends of clippings and rejections are gathered into sacks, passed through a sieve and employed in the manufacture of Havana cigarettes.

The cigar-makers — Cuban and negro men, with women for the lower-grade work — sit in long rows at little tables, each with his supply of filling-leaves and wrapping-leaves, a cup of paste and a knife. The men are all in shirt-sleeves; almost all wear straw hats; and they look like nothing so much as a swarthy, silent, industrious body of students in a big lecture-hall awaiting the arrival of the lecturer.

Until you are used to it, the atmosphere is overpoweringly heavy with the ammonia-smell of the crude tobacco; the windows of the factory are filled, for the most part, with orange-coloured glass; and the subdued light

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and heavy air make it hard for you to keep awake. As you come sleepily into the sunshine, past cupboards that are stacked for the moment with tens of thousands of the finest cigars in the world, you may sigh that, however long you live, you will not live long enough to smoke as many as you would like.

Then, perhaps, your empty regrets will give way to more manly resolution; and you may determine to smoke as many as you can in the time that you may be spared to live.

HAVANA. 8 MARCH, 1923.

One of the few consolations in advancing age is that, the older you become, the more you are likely to travel and, the more you travel, the more friends you will meet in the places where you least expect them. It was after breakfast at the Sevilla Hotel, Havana, when I had dropped in from Nassau and he from Mexico City, that I met once more my old friend

THE COMPLETE TRAVELLER

His Opposite Number had been in Washington a week. For England, it was the middle of the war; for America, the beginning. And, as soon as the preliminaries were in order, the Complete Traveller took a night train from New York and attended a conference at breakfast-time. Though an American born and bred, he had not hitherto been in Washington; but, after living in New York, he had no difficulty in making himself at home in any smaller city. It is just this quality of making himself

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immediately at home everywhere that raises the complete traveller above his fellows.

"There's not a room to be had in Washington, by the way," said the Opposite Number, as they met.

"I got mine at the Lafayette all right," answered the Complete Traveller; "but I shall eat here. It's more convenient." And, slipping behind the queue that was waiting hungrily by the entrance to the Shoreham restaurant, he led the way to a table in the window. "The captain here is a smart boy," he continued mysteriously; and for the rest of his time in Washington the Complete Traveller seemed to have his choice of tables.

The Opposite Number explained the nature of the work which the Complete Traveller and he had to accomplish.

"It will take us a month," he predicted.

"And this is Thursday," said the Complete Traveller, as he telegraphed to New York for his car.

On Friday morning he drove his Opposite Number round the apartment-houses of Washington until he found one to his taste; then he telegraphed to New York for his wife and son, who arrived on Saturday in time for breakfast.

"I ought to have warned you!", the Opposite Number cried in dismay on Saturday night. "Washington is dry on Sundays."

"So I heard," answered the Complete Traveller's Wife, herself a Complete Traveller. "I've been buying gin and vermouth and a shaker to-day. We can get orange-juice and cracked ice at the hotel; and if you'll come to our room a few minutes before lunch . . ."

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In time the Opposite Number returned to London; in time the Complete Traveller crossed to Paris. They met again at Skindle's Hotel, Maidenhead. A heat-wave had sent to the river all who could escape to the river. No one grudged them that; but the Opposite Number looked with misgiving at the queue of people who were waiting hungrily by the door of the coffee-room.

"So this is Skindle's," said the Complete Traveller. "The head-waiter here is a smart fellow," he added, as he led the way to a table by an open window. "I've been thinking over that talk we had in Washington about the cost of the war." . . .

The friendship was picked up where it had been laid down; that night it was laid down where it had been picked up. The Complete Traveller went back to New York; the Opposite Number drifted to Pernambuco. They met a year later in London, where the Complete Traveller, under the indignant noses of hungry men and women who were being told that the hotel was full, secured accommodation for himself and his wife and a table by a window. They next met in Havana.

The Complete Traveller had arrived from Mexico City less than twenty-four hours earlier. Without wasting time, he had emerged victoriously from single combat with the Cuban Customs; he had secured election to the Country Club; he could criticize a Diqueri cocktail as a connoisseur; and he had reserved the best seats for a *jai-alai* match that evening. All this the Opposite Number discovered as they lunched together. The res-

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taurant was grievously crowded; but the Complete Traveller and his wife had been given an excellent table by an open window.

"Talking about what the war has cost each of the allies . . .," began the Complete Traveller.

"One moment!", his wife interrupted. "If we 're all going to Kingston, can't we go together?"

"It's a dry ship," the Opposite Number warned them.

"The best place to buy a shaker," said the Complete Traveller, "is the drug-store opposite the hotel. You can get limes in the market, which is just behind: five for a quarter. They charge you two dollars for a bottle of Bacardi rum here; but I can get you better rum for a dollar and a half at the American Club. . . . Well, you remember our talk about the Balfour Note." . . .

In time the Opposite Number drifted south through Jamaica and east to England. The Complete Traveller and his wife went by Panama to Lima and Valparaiso. The three of them arranged to meet a year later in Mandalay; but, before that, they will probably come together from Nagasaki and Port Sudan, picking up an unchanging friendship at Murren and laying it in lavender till they meet by accident at a window-table in Port Elizabeth.

At Havana, the Opposite Number was accompanied on board by his friends; and, when they left him, he had a curious dream. He had been standing, as it seemed, for half eternity by the bank of an inky river in a perpetual, sunless half-light. Far away, on the opposite

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bank, he could see the ferry; but no one troubled to work it until the Complete Traveller arrived.

"It's an every-other-day service," he explained, after whistling once on his fingers; "but this Charon is a smart fellow. . . . I hope you have n't been waiting long?"

"It does n't matter now that you're both here," answered the Opposite Number. "By the way, if it is n't an impertinent question, where are you bound for?"

"The Elysian Fields."

"Can't we all go together?", asked the Complete Traveller's wife.

"I'm afraid . . . my destination . . . is rather different," the Opposite Number faltered.

"Oh, but my husband will arrange that! I suppose you know this is a dry ferry? Yes, we heard about it in time. I bought a new shaker this morning; and, if we talk nicely to Charon, I'm sure he'll let us have some cracked ice." . . .

HAVANA. 9 MARCH, 1923.

The one thing intolerable about Havana is that we all have to leave it sooner or later, at death if not before. Realizing our reluctance, Havana — in common with the other leading islands of the West Indies — puts every obstacle in the way. It is generally a far, far simpler thing to go from Trinidad to Jamaica by way of England, from Jamaica to Cuba by way of New York or Panama. It is literally and disastrously true at this moment that some of my fellow-passengers from Barba-

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dos to Trinidad are marooned in Jamaica, refusing to pay an exorbitant fare to New York and hoping vaguely to pick up a ship in Kingston and to reach Barbados by Avonmouth and Liverpool.

My complaint is altruistic, for I myself had the luck to find a cruising-steamer waiting for me at the moment when I was obliged to leave Cuba. She was no ordinary boat; mine was no ordinary luck. For the first time in my life — and a thousand things tell me that it will be the last — I travelled by

A JOY-SHIP

No one can forget the Dromedary Picnics in *The Wrecker*. You may think that such mass-jollity was the licence of two fanciful novelists; you may protest that such things would never happen save in the 'eighties and then would never happen outside San Francisco. You may explain away everything, but you will not forget the immortal description which Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne have given you. And, should you relegate these things to California in the eighteen-eighties, that shews that you have not boarded a joy-ship in the nineteen-twenties.

"*Sun, Ozone and Music!*", ran the sketch advertisement. "*PINKERTON HEBDOMADARY PICNICS! Five dollars a head, and ladies free. .Monster Olio of Attractions. Free luncheon under the greenwood tree, Dance on the elastic sward. Home again in the Bright Evening Hours.*" . . .

Recalling that, you may wonder how the sketch advertisement of this pleasure-cruise would be drafted. A

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band could be promised; and twenty-three days of ozone, with sunshine and warmth for most of the time; and coloured lights strung round the decks; and dancing. . . . If that is not a 'monster olio of attractions', what—in Heaven's name—is? Pinkerton provided an impromptu bar of corrugated iron, but American ships are perforce 'dry'; their cabins, however, are not. . . . And there is an honorary steward to make all arrangements and distribute tickets and answer questions and infuse life into the party, which is more than a hundred strong, hailing mostly from the Middle West and setting eyes on the sea for the first time. It is a great adventure.

They have come to enjoy themselves; and you, who perhaps have intruded on them for no better reason than to go from one place to another, leaving enjoyment to take care of itself, may feel chastened when you reflect how few of all the enterprises that history records have been inspired by ambition so single-minded and, you may add, so innocent. There was a predatory taint to stain the record of the Crusaders; the English factory acts were in part the revenge of the country party on the towns; Lincoln's enemies persist in saying that his thoughts on abolition were afterthoughts. In your own obscure life you can hardly say that you ever do a thing for the sole end of pleasure. When you go to a theatre it is chiefly because you know the author, or because you are bullied into going or because you cannot do anything else with your guests. When you play golf, you keep but one eye on the ball; the other is on your figure. At a banquet, your attention is distracted from

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the food by your dim consciousness that you are supporting a cause or expressing your confidence in a man. Not since you feasted at a school-treat have you assisted at a party organized purely for pleasure.

Is the reason to be found in your increasing age? Is enjoyment a monopoly of youth? Is the joy-ship found only in American waters because only an American keeps a heart young enough to be worthy of it? Europe has her personally conducted parties, her inclusive tours; but there is no intentional enjoyment about them, no fairy-lights, no conscientious gaiety. The Englishman who explores Italy in a fortnight tells you frankly that he wants a holiday or a change of air; he is trying to broaden his mind; he has a dozen excuses to replace each one that you demolish. He never says, however, that he is going to enjoy himself. He never does. He knows, too, that he never will.

Yet they can do this in America. A 'vacation' there is something serious and complete, having no single point in common with an English holiday where you concentrate on your hotel-accommodation and leave the golf to chance or concentrate on the golf and take your chance with the hotel-accommodation. In America, to begin with, you dress the part: he who runs shall read that you are holiday-making; you strip to the buff, exchanging one personality for another and linking your old self to the new with nothing more than a pair of horn-spectacles and an Ever-Sharp pencil. You dress the part uniformly; and, though you may express a wayward individuality in your under-clothes, you must standardize your exterior in a hat of brown plaited

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straw, "sports" coat and white, duck knickerbockers, a pair of shooting stockings (anything may happen on a joy-ship) and shoes of black and white canvas. So attired, how can you help enjoying yourself?

Should your own zest flag, you would catch the infection from your fellows. There was this to be said for the massed advance of the Germans in their late war: marching shoulder to shoulder, they took courage from their right-hand neighbour and passed it on to their left; and, when you go ashore in the same launch, when you tour strange islands in the same cars, the warm pressure of these joyous shoulders cannot fail to impart a glow to your own. Action and reaction, say the physiologists, are equal and opposite: you might fear a mood of depression after gaiety so long sustained. That risk, however, has not been overlooked; and, when you have come with your party to the same hotel, you will find that a dance has been arranged, if not 'on the elastic sward', at least on a chain-hung floor. "*Chicago, Chicago. . . .*" The melody which has been haunting you ever since you came on board breaks out again. You might, for a moment, almost fancy yourself back in Detroit, Michigan. . . .

Far from least, in the "monster olio", is the attraction of feeling that, however distant your Detroit may seem on the map, you are carrying enough of it with you to make a spiritual home wherever you go. The ship itself, the hotels, the meals, the names and order and combination of the dishes have been standardized to the Detroit measurements. If you shut your eyes, you would hardly know that you were drifting over the

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most romantic sea in the world, with Havana behind you and Port Antonio ahead; and, without shutting your eyes, you can compass the same result if you turn your back on the Caribbean and settle down to a good day's bridge.

It is more than a question of youth and age. He would slander England who said that the English had no zest for holidays; and, if the joy-ship makes her strongest appeal to Americans, it is because the English prefer to take their pleasures otherwise and more sadly. At Kingston, maybe, you transship to a British line; and the difference beats upon you like the chill breath of a tomb. No fairy-lights festooning the decks; no band, as likely as not; no 'H. Loudon Dodd, Esq.,' as 'Manager and Honorary Steward' to introduce everybody. You must get on without it all, as best you can, though the majority of these English, too, are on pleasure bent.

You must get on without it all; and, indeed, you might be rather embarrassed if the way of life on a British liner were suddenly Americanized. Import the dishes to which you are accustomed in your own Detroit; encourage the passengers to feel that they can make a spiritual home wherever they go? There would be nothing to discuss if the ship's food were put out of bounds for criticism; there would be no 'perfect dinner' to devise for your first night ashore! You would destroy the Englishman's privilege of travelling half the way round the world without speaking to his fellow-passengers.

And this, strange as it may seem to an American, is the first 'attraction' in any 'monster olio' that an Eng-

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lishman would emphasize in commending an English joy-ship to his compatriots.

AT SEA. 10 MARCH, 1923 — 12 MARCH, 1923.

The tropics hurry to meet us with every hour that brings us nearer to Jamaica. When Isle of Pines sank below the horizon, we lost sight of land. It appeared again, as a dark hummock on our starboard bow; and by full dawn we were running in to the wooded double bay of Port Antonio.

JAMAICA ONCE MORE

To see the island at its best, you should approach it from the north. As you sight the green hills under their low-lying clouds and drop anchor in a blue-palm-circled harbour, again as you drive to Kingston, through the Blue Mountains to the east of the island, you will understand why Jamaica is called the 'pearl of the Caribbean'. It is better to leave from Kingston than to arrive there by sea. The dry, dun mountains of the south, here blue and there violet as the shadows of the clouds drift slowly across, are sufficiently imposing; but Kingston from sea or land is an earthquake wasted.

To be sure, no one lives in the city if he can live outside. Though "the doctor" blows the city clean each day, it is still hot at night; and, thanks to the mountains which press on the outskirts of Kingston, you can live at what height and in what temperature you please. And, if you are not tied to the capital, you can choose your scenery as well as your climate, making it less or more

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mountainous, less or more luxuriantly tropical, inland or seaboard. Best of all, if you are a visitor, the island is small enough for you to wander from Kingston to Port Antonio and from Mandeville to Montego Bay, sampling each in turn. In the hills you escape a heat which is more intense than anything in Cuba or the Bahamas during these winter months; by the sea you will get bathing of the kind that sends you out of the water to cool.

You may amuse yourself and exasperate your friends by asking them what, in Jamaica, is characteristic of the island in the sense that oleanders are characteristic of Bermuda and "blue grass" of Kentucky. In the end they will perhaps answer: "The chief characteristic of Jamaica is that it has no chief characteristic". As you mount 4000 feet by the corkscrew road to Newcastle, you look up to a cloud-capped Simla and down to a gorge of the Andes, drenched with tropical vegetation; and, on the other side of the same range, those dusty hills seem never to have known rain. Drive to Castleton and on to the "north side": you will pass, before you have time to notice, from another gorge to a banana belt, thence to cocoanut-palm plantations, then to rolling meadow-land that might have been carved out of England. The two-mile tunnel of Fern Gully is pure Devonshire; and Mandeville, with its red soil and its village-green, is a Shropshire hamlet two thousand feet up a Jamaican mountain. The Roaring River Falls; the great stairway, overhung with ferns, down which Dunn's River plunges into the sea: these are unique in themselves and characteristic of the north coast, but not

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of Jamaica. The island, in formation and colouring and vegetation, is too Protean, too elusive, to be caught and held by a single word.

With less varied sources of wealth, Jamaica has suffered less than Trinidad or Cuba from sudden fluctuations of prosperity. With her sugar, her bananas and her famous Blue Mountain coffee, she has more to fear from a long drought than from glutted markets and epileptic prices. Sometimes you will hear a sentimental complaint that America is competing too successfully in the manufactured goods which Jamaica has to import; more often you will hear a deeper note of regret that this island, in common with all the British West Indies, seems to be forgotten by the English. It is exquisitely beautiful and gloriously hot; the voyage from England to Jamaica takes a fortnight; and, at the end, there is a welcome to warm any man's heart. Of the thousands who leave England every winter, why do so few visit their own West Indies?

Partly it is want of enterprise and faith among those who will not believe that they can reach Kingston with less trouble and fewer changes than Monte Carlo. Partly it is want of co-operation among the islands, which are too prone to let their neighbours go hang so long as they themselves secure an adequate steamship-service. Partly it is want of public spirit with the shipping-companies, which are — short-sightedly — more concerned with their freights than with imperial ties that pay no immediate dividends.

It is commonly said that the best way of winning consideration from a West Indian line is to disguise your-

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self as a banana; you will then take precedence of mails and passengers; and you will pass from one place to another more easily than if you merely try to see a little of the British Empire. In so far as the life of the empire depends on the fraternity of its members and in so far as the fraternity of its members depends on their ease of intercommunication, it is bad policy for shipping-companies, which depend in some measure on the life and prosperity of the empire, to subordinate mails and passengers to freights. There might conceivably be more freight to carry to and from the West Indies if the West Indies were made more accessible. Already they are accessible enough to the United States; and they are being made ever more accessible by regular services of American passenger steamers which tour the islands during the winter months. Why will no British company follow this example?

If the passage from England to the Caribbean Sea is longer than from the United States, the English are better broken to sea-travel than are the Americans; it takes little longer to reach warm water from Liverpool or Southampton than from New York or Boston; the journey is much the same from London and Chicago. In three months, for an expenditure of two hundred pounds or so, a man could go from London to the West Indies and from the West Indies to London, staying one week in Trinidad, two in Jamaica, one in Cuba and two in the Bahamas. A weekly service of ships during the winter months could drop one set of passengers in Trinidad and carry on to Jamaica the set which had been dropped by the ship before. The next would drop

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in Trinidad, carry from Trinidad to Jamaica, drop in Jamaica and carry from Jamaica to Nassau, so that only the first and last of the series would have to run the risk of travelling light for part of the voyage. There is no lack of people with money and inclination to winter abroad, to winter in the tropics, among these of their own blood and speech; but, if they are to spend this time and money on their venture, they expect better accommodation, more palatable food and easier communications than they can obtain at present.

KINGSTON. 19 MARCH, 1923.

I have been here a week; and to-day I sail, heavy-hearted, for England. This, then, is the last time I shall write to you. A boat leaving at mid-day for New York; by her I send you my

LAST PAGES FROM A JAMAICAN SCRAP-BOOK

Mandeville

We set out through Spanish Town, the old capital, and stopped to inspect the cathedral and the court house; then we drove on towards the middle of the island, rising steadily in steadily increasing cold till we reached Mandeville, which lies more than 2,000 feet above sea-level. It is a small, pretty village in a setting of red roads and green trees, with a club, a hospital, a few shops and private houses and two hotels to which the heat-tormented citizens of Kingston escape for a few days of cool winds in the summer. Rain is plentiful

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(to-day we had the unusual experience of seeing a sharp shower in Kingston itself); and, with a moist, temperate atmosphere and a rich, iron soil, almost anything will grow. I saw orange-trees and grape-fruit trees in fruit and carnations in flower; the hedges are, for the most part, of calepha, a crimson or copper shrub, and I saw more convolvulus, bougainvillea and hibiscus than anywhere in the island.

After an excellent luncheon we rested and then returned to the plains and to a heat which I at least found very welcome.

What is "typical Jamaica scenery"? We argued this at length on our way down from the hills, without reaching any very satisfactory conclusion, though we all agreed that Jamaica was harder than most places to describe in terms that would make a vivid picture for any one who had not seen it. I fancy that the island has never made up its mind whether it is to be tropical or sub-tropical; and the only thing characteristic of its vegetation is the mixture of the two. At Port Antonio, the greenest part that I have seen, you might be in the most tropical section of Trinidad: it is cocoanut palms *et praeterea nihil*. At Kingston, looking from Port Royal over the plain to the Blue Mountains, you are in the brownest and dustiest part and might fancy yourself to be looking at the Cordilleras at almost any point on the northern sea-board of Chili. Between these extremes, with a patchwork of pale-green guinea-grass, olive-green banana-trees, green-and-yellow canes, occasional clumps of bamboo, occasional fields of tobacco and ragged copses of logwood — the whole punctuated

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with rows of sisal, odd, unexpected palms and dusty, wayside cactus —, you might be in any one of a thousand places. Jamaica would be comparatively easy to catalogue; but it would be far from easy to describe. At present, in my search for anything that can be called “characteristic” of its formation, its vegetation, its inhabitants or their manner of living, I can think only of this haphazard blend of the tropical and sub-tropical and, in the south, of the cloud shadows on the mountains. For a place which is without rain for many months on end, Kingston and the south side — perhaps by reason of their regular winds — have a surprising number of clouds which threaten every moment to break into heavy rain. Behind them, round them and sometimes through them the sun shines steadily; and, as the mountains by day are a dusty brown, they form a neutral ground for the large number of different colours that appear as the shadows of the clouds drift slowly across.

Newcastle

At the end of the last century the Leinsters were stationed at Newcastle, where a somnolent War Office forgot them for seven years or more, only remembering their existence towards the end of the South African war. By that time there was only one thing that the Leinsters wished to do: that was to mutiny; and they seized the the earliest opportunity after landing in South Africa.

We set out at 11.15, in a car which broke down occasionally but not habitually, for a twenty-mile drive along a road which has some 360 hair-pin and other bends in it. Newcastle lies 4,000 feet above sea-level

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and was built as a sanctuary to which yellow fever could not penetrate. The carriage-road twists to and fro on either side of a densely wooded gorge; and, though there is no sign of running water, the vegetation is so green that the valley might belong to another island: no one could associate it with the dusty mountains which are seen from Kingston. All the way up and all the way down, we swung around sudden corners and saw the cantonments, first on our right and then on our left, at a height that seemed wholly unattainable; we saw, too, a gradual unfolding of the gorge as every twist gave us a new angle of vision. The plain became visible in a blue haze of heat; then we saw Kingston, then Port Royal and the harbour, then the whole bay, with the varying depths of the water marked by the colours and with brown stains on the blue and green to reveal the reefs. The completest view was, naturally enough, kept for the end. When the car proved obstinate in its breakdown, we set off to cover the last mile on foot. Scrambling like mountain-goats past the parade-ground, the hospital, the officers' quarters and the mess, we climbed to the highest nest in this eyrie; and from there we seemed to have the whole eastern end of Jamaica at our feet, while the north of the island fell to the control of the neighbouring encampment of Greenwich.

At an altitude of more than 4,000 feet, you might sleep under four blankets and still be cold. The wind never ceases to blow, save when the clouds fall on Newcastle in a wet white mist. As the garrison is sent here for three years, a jocular proverb has arisen to explain

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that for the first year you admire the view, for the second you cultivate your garden and for the third you take to drink. Assuredly the view is wonderful; and, like every view of these mountains, it is ever-changing in colour. The gardens, too, are wonderfully varied and well-kept; but I should never be censorious of a man who went melancholy-mad or knifed his brother-officers.

The drive down was even more beautiful than the drive up, as our vision was not so much obscured by the hood of the car; and I carried away memories of a cork-screw white road with a wall of rock on the one side and a precipice on the other, a wide gap of blue sea at the mouth of the gorge, a crown of blue sky above and, in the gorge itself and climbing madly up its sides, a vivid jungle of palm-trees, bananas, bamboos and cactus, some of them the mayflower cactus, which sends up a slender maypole surmounted by a pyramid of light-orange blossom. By the roadside there stretched miles of Christmas bells and red-bronze pepper flowers; the little gardens were crowded with blue agapanthus lilies, brown-and-white 'nun' orchids, roses, geraniums and madonna lilies; and the life of the road was made by staggering mules and donkeys, straight-backed negro women with big and little bundles on their heads and coloured handkerchiefs knotted about their hair, lethargic dogs, harassed poultry and grinning, half-naked children who threw flowers into the car as we passed.

My Last and Longest Tour of the Island

At the end of the day we agreed that the chief characteristic of Jamaican scenery was its quickly changing

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variety, which resulted in its having no one thing that could be called an unmistakable characteristic; and the drive to-day might have been chosen to support our conclusion. As we left Kingston, we had before us the very "characteristic" blue of the mountains to the east and north of the plain; then, on the now familiar road to Castleton, we had "characteristic" gorge-scenery, with dense tropical vegetation, distant water in a half-dry torrent-bed, high mountains and winding roads. We then ran through miles of banana plantations and came to the coast road at the north-east of the island through more miles of cocoanut-palms. Skirting Annotto Bay, we drove along the coast to Dunn's River, with plantations of palm-trees to our left and a blue sea on our right, rippling lazily into a succession of wooded bays. This part of the island is plentifully endowed with rivers, of which several find their way to the sea in long and marvellously beautiful water-falls; and the roads are hedged for miles with green-and-purple weeds so appropriately named "the Wandering Jew".

Shortly after leaving Dunn's River we turned inland through Fern Gully: two miles of winding, uphill road between precipitous banks so thickly covered with giant ferns that, though the sun was shining with all its tropical-afternoon brilliance, we were in twilight. And, after rising clear of the gully, we met one more "characteristic" kind of scenery in the rolling grassland of the big grazing estates on the way to Maneague.

Sunset came as we sat on a verandah of the Maneague Hotel; and one of the thousand things that are loosely called "the most beautiful sight in the world" was the

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contrast of the eucalyptus trees and the sky behind them: the most perfect black lace on the finest pale-green silk. Lighted on our way by fire-flies innumerable, we mounted, by many hair-pin bends, to the top of Diablo Hill and dropped down through the Bog Walk — by yet another river running in the bed of yet another gorge — in such darkness as can only be found in the tropics when a very young moon has retired for the night. Then we reached Spanish Town and returned to Kingston along the bumpy, dusty plain-road. *And, as I write, the last of the West Indies, violet in the radiance of my last West Indian sunset, is fading from sight. . . .*

AT SEA. 19 MARCH, 1923.

